UNDERSTANDING NATION FROM AN AFRICAN VANTAGE POINT

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CHARLES UNIVERSITY
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THE OROMO POLITY DURING THE 16TH CENTURY AS A POINT OF REFERENCE

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO CHARLES UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF ARTS AND EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY, ATELIER IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN TEMA ERASMUS MUNDUS.

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Declaration

Hereby, I declare that I have worked out independently this thesis, using only listed sources and references.

05June 2013

Preface

Ever since I came across the concepts such as *ethnie*, nation, ethnicity and nationalism, the effort to master their meaning and to use them for any kind of academic purpose has not been an easy task. This is true because the concepts have ambiguous meanings which in turn lead to the production of various kinds of empirical generalizations and theoretical abstractions within the fields of ethnicity, ethnic conflicts, nation and nationalism.

Given the fact that these concepts are highly volatile in their politicized context, it can be claimed that almost any one from all walks of life is interested in one way or the other to use these concepts. It follows then, one may claim also that both practitioners and intellectuals in the social sciences and humanities participate not only by using the concepts but also by formulating definitions from a common sense perspectives. For these reasons, these concepts are one of those most widely used concepts and terms in the everyday life though there is hardly any consensus even among the scholars in the field of study how to understand or to use these concepts.

It has been a daunting task to encounter these two kinds of traditions that circumscribe these concepts, namely a tradition from the common sense perspectives and the other from the established traditions in the studies of ethnicity, nation and nationalism. I have had a number of productive debates with colleagues and alike for the past few years. Though it was a challenge by itself trying to address these two gaps, the discussion and debates were very productive as they have enabled me to see the concepts from different perspectives.

The most pressing difficulty that I encountered during the period of the current MA project was finding a valid and strong epistemological foundation for this study. Even if the main research questions for the present thesis has been the same since the proposal phase, the MA project hardly had a stable, well established and justifiable methodology until later this year when I came across to the present epistemological ground that will be the focus of chapter two. Such shift in methodological position was made during the winter of 2012.

Given that the time was running fast towards the deadline during the winter of 2012, the timing was not safe to make such big decision for the MA project by then. Yet, the methodological shift was a worthy risk to make for the new epistemological position rendered real boost for the entire project to leap forward towards achieving the goal of the project. This is mainly because it has given an impetus for the MA project which otherwise had been in a stand still for the project was locked in a kind of methodological impasse. Thanks to the methodological inspirations from Gadamer and Koselleck, the thesis has transformed into a productive research endeavor that the different parts of the thesis ranging from the research questions to the final concluding statements are harmonized through a kind of dialectical interplay among each other.

Owing to such challenges which have been mentioned so far and some others which are deliberately excluded for time and space considerations, I had often passed through times of difficulties during which I lost confidence in myself and in everything that I was doing. From this context, I consider the current state of my project as a success by itself. In this regard, therefore, I would like to express my gratitude towards Almighty God. I am deeply thankful to Almighty God for his gracious love. Throughout all those difficult times that I have encountered so far, God has given me his love and support which are the source of my stamina and strength in order to accomplish many things in life including this thesis!

The success of this thesis also rests on the support and encouragement of many individuals and institutions. I would like to express my gratitude towards my two supervisors. I am highly indebted to Professor Lud'a Klusakova, Charles University, for her kindness and thoughtfulness, for her proper academic guidance, for her constructive feedbacks throughout my engagement with the present thesis. It has also been a privilege to work with Ádám Takács, Assistance Professor at Atelier, Eötvös Loránd University. This thesis has gained enormously from his critical insights, his methodological seminars and his overall constructive feedbacks.

I also like to acknowledge my debt to Gábor Czoch, Associate Professor at Atelier, Eötvös Loránd University, for reading parts of my drafts and giving me insightful comments. I have also enormously benefited from attending his classes which inspired me to read some basic methodological texts for my present thesis. I am also thankful to Jaroslav Ira, PhD candidate at Charles University, for reading parts of my drafts and giving me critical insights which

were helpful to improve my drafts. I also like to thank Gabriel Rockhill, Assistance Professor at Villanova University, for reading my methodological chapter and giving me insightful comments. Nevertheless, if one finds any kinds of limitations or weakness inside the current thesis, it has to be noted that I am solely accountable and responsible in such cases.

During graduate school life in Europe, I have received support and encouragement from several professors, TEMA administrative staffs and fellow TEMA students and friends. I am highly indebted to all of them. My special thanks go to Alemyehu Kumsa, Charles University, for his kindness to use his personal belongings for my project and for his encouragements and advices. I am also highly indebted to Peter Erdősi, Eötvös Loránd University, for his support, encouragements and insightful comments.

I am highly grateful towards Jozsef Litkei who has painstakingly edited my drafts. My special thanks also extend to the current TEMA Secretariat Eszter György for her kindness and supports. I am deeply grateful for all those professors and students I came across in both Praha and Budapest. My special thanks go to my Hungarian friend Daniel Verse and my Costa Rican friend Javier Azofeifa. I am also grateful towards two of my TEMA friends, Paul and Luis, for editing my French Abstract, *résumé*.

I am highly indebted to my families and friends both within and outside Ethiopia for their love and support. My special thanks go to Shawn Schwartz for her unreserved love, support, care and encouragement ever since my high school times. I am also highly indebted to Ahmed Seid, Ermiyas Girma, Atitegeb Meazah, Meseret Tefeta, Tesfaye Ababu, Daniel Mesert, Semira Ali, Mohhamed Siraj and Tewodros Belayneh and his entire family. I am so lucky to have their love, support and care throughout my academic career.

I would like to extend my thanks to some key institutions that have made my study in Europe productive, comfortable and enjoyable. First and foremost, I am highly indebted to European Commission's Erasmus Mundus Program which has given me this wonderful opportunity to study in Europe by sponsoring my study and other costs. I am also thankful to the library and manuscript sections of Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, the National Library in Prague, and the library of Central European University in Budapest which turned to be my safe heavens apart from my reliance on their abundance scholarly collections.

As far as the structure of the thesis is considered, I will briefly introduce the organizational framework of the whole thesis. The thesis has four chapters and a final concluding section. The main task of chapter one is twofold: One, to provide a brief overview into some historiographical debates upon some basic issues of Ethiopian historiography with particular emphasis to Oromo historiography; second, to provide some highlights concerning the basic issues that are subject of argument among various scholars of nation and nationalism from macroscopic perspective.

Chapter two is entirely devoted for a task that provides a thorough methodological discussion in relation to the basic research questions that the current thesis aspires to answer. Since the central argument of the present thesis is related with the issue of validity against a dominant school of thought in the study of nation and nationalism, it is indispensable to ground the whole thesis in a strong epistemological foundation. Therefore, chapter two can be considered as the corner stone of the whole thesis.

In chapter three, the Oromo socio-historical specificity during the 16th century will be presented by using two modes of exposition. The first kind is descriptive in nature in which socio-cultural and political specificities of the Oromo polity during the same period will be presented from a historical and ethnographic perspectives though it will only be a brief overview. By using the descriptive part as a point of departure, there will also be thorough interpretation of different aspects of Oromo polity during the 16th century in a way the discussion will be in harmony with the basic research questions that the thesis aspires to address.

Finally, there will also be some attempt to understand the concept of nation as developed by European discursive traditions. This will be the focus of chapter four. In harmony with the chapters that have been mentioned, the thesis will conclude in its final section. Although the current research endeavor can be considered as a miniature within the vast tradition in the study of nation and nationalism, its scholarly outcome will hopefully have a contribution both to existing traditions and further studies in the field.

Abstracts

A lot has been written on the subject matters of nation and nationalism for at least the last two centuries. Yet, there is hardly any single, universally accepted, overarching theory in the field that can facilitate common understanding among scholars who are working on the two concepts. It is evident that the theories of nation and nationalism need to be tested against the back drop of the richness of empirical realities across time and space.

Yet, the task of understanding nation and nationalism has always been a daunting task mainly because the empirical reality by far exceeds the historical knowledge that has been recorded in the chronicles of world history. Provided that only a small slice of human history has been recorded so far, our knowledge of world history remains insignificant and incomplete, highly constrained by the horizon of human experience, which is inherently finite and limited.

As part of the recurrent attempt from different scholars and students of nation and nationalism who seek to understand these two phenomena in different contexts across time, the current thesis also aspires to understand the concept of a nation by using the same tradition that is inherently part of European discursive unit, but from a different vantage point. Departing from historical specificity related to the Oromo polity during the 16th century, the present thesis aspires to infuse fresh interpretation to the existing European tradition about a nation.

Therefore, the thesis seeks to answer the following two basic questions: First, to what extent does the modernist view that embeds the origin of a nation in the European historical context is valid? Second, to what extent does the existing normative knowledge base concerning the phenomena of a nation and an ethnic entity adequately delineate the conceptual and empirical boundary in between of these two phenomena.

In order to address these two questions, the thesis will attempt to accomplish the following two basic tasks: First, the thesis will attempt to challenge the modernist universal claim, particularly its temporal and spatial impositions, that had been formulated concerning the

nation by trying to understand the phenomenon of the nation from a different temporal and spatial context, one that is based on the case of the Oromo during the 16th century.

To accomplish such ambitious endeavor, the thesis will attempt to deconstruct the concept of a *tribe* as representation of phenomenon peculiar to 'uncivilized societies' of Africa and elsewhere. In parallel, the thesis will attempt to understand the concept of an ethnic entity in comparison with a nation. Secondly, the thesis will attempt to understand the European fore-tradition in relation to a nation, especially as it perceives the pre-modern period, as a means to grasp the social and historical context that underlies the modernists' understanding of nationhood.

The central focus of this thesis is; therefore, to expose a basic internal contradiction that is inherent in the existing conceptual understanding of a nation. Using the Oromo case as a vantage point, it is the conviction of this thesis that the concept of a nation is 'Eurocentric' to the neglect of historical specificities outside Europe such as the case with the Oromo people. Having such conviction against the validity of the modernist universal axioms, however, imposes a methodological requisite upon the present thesis to be grounded on a strong epistemological foundation. Thus the thesis will rely on Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics* as its epistemological foundation. Since the thesis will depart from the presumption that considers a nation as a concept, the thesis will attempt to capitalize on some methodological and conceptual insights from Reinhhart Koselleck's *History of Concept.*

The thesis will use two kinds of source materials. In order to understand a nation from the vantage point of the Oromo polity during the 16th century, the thesis will rely on some primary and a number of secondary sources. The sources include historical written sources that have been produced between the 16th century and 21st century. As supplement, some ethnographic materials concerning the Oromo that have been collected by various authors after 19th century will also be used. On the contrary, the thesis will also rely on a body of European literature on nation and nationalism that have been produced since the latter half of the 19th century.

Finally, the thesis will concluded its overall endeavor by making some suggestions. First, the concept of *tribe* is not methodologically appropriate to be used as a conceptual apparatus to represent the social and political organization of the Oromo during the 16th century. Second, the concepts of a nation and an ethnic entity in their ideal form overlap to a greater extent that it is hardly possible to clearly delineate the conceptual and empirical boundary between the two concepts when seen from the vantage point of the Oromo specificity during the 16th century. Last, the modernist view that claims nation as the mere logical outcome of the modern period is not valid when World history is considered as the source of authority.

Résumé

Beaucoup a été écrit au sujet de la nation et du nationalisme, au moins depuis les deux derniers siècles. Pourtant, il n'y a guère de théorie universellement acceptée en ce domaine, qui puisse constituer un terrain d'entente entre les différents chercheurs travaillant sur ces deux concepts. Il est évident que les théories de la nation et du nationalisme doivent être testées à partir de la riche toile de fond des réalités empiriques, au travers du temps et de l'espace. Pourtant, la tâche de comprendre la nation et le nationalisme a toujours été une tâche ardue du fait que la réalité empirique dépasse de loin la base des connaissances enregistrées dans les chroniques de l'histoire du monde. Ne permettant ainsi qu'à une infime partie de l'histoire humaine d'être écrite, notre connaissance de l'histoire du monde est partielle voir insignifiante. Notre connaissance est fortement contrainte par l'horizon de l'expérience humaine qui est par nature finie et limitée.

Tout comme dans les tentatives récurrentes de différents chercheurs et étudiants intéressés à comprendre nation et nationalisme dans différents contextes à travers le temps, la thèse actuelle aspire également à comprendre le concept de nation en utilisant la même tradition inhérente à la discursivité européenne, mais depuis une perspective différent. En s'appuyant sur l'histoire du peuple Oromo au cours du 16ème siècle, cette thèse aspire à insuffler une nouvelle interprétation de la tradition européenne concernant la nation. Par conséquent, la thèse vise à répondre aux deux questions fondamentales suivantes : tout d'abord, dans quelle mesure le point de vue moderniste qui intègre l'origine d'une nation à l'historicité européenne est-il valide ? Enfin, dans quelle mesure la base normée des connaissances concernant les phénomènes de nation et d'entité ethnique délimite-t-elle correctement la frontière conceptuelle et empirique entre ces deux phénomènes.

Afin de répondre à ces deux questions, la thèse tentera d'accomplir deux tâches. Premièrement, la thèse tentera de contester le model moderniste universel, en particulier ses contraintes temporelles et spatiales en essayant de comprendre le phénomène de nation dans un contexte temporel et spatial différent : les Oromo au cours du XVIème siècle. Pour réaliser cet ambitieux projet, la thèse tentera de déconstruire le concept de tribu vue comme model propre aux sociétés « primitives » d'Afrique et d'ailleurs. En parallèle, la thèse va tenter de comprendre le concept d'entité ethnique par rapport à celui de nation. Deuxièmement, la thèse

tentera d'analyser la tradition européenne antérieure à l'émergence du concept de nation comme moyen de comprendre le contexte historique et social de l'époque. En particulier la façon dont la période pré-moderne est analysée ; la toile de fond de la compréhension moderniste de la nation.

Le point central de cette thèse est donc de résoudre la contradiction fondamentale inhérente à la conceptualisation existante de la nation. En utilisant la spécificité du cas Oromo comme angle d'analyse, la conviction de cette thèse est que le concept de nation est « eurocentré », cela au détriment des spécificités historiques présentes hors Europe. S'opposer de la sorte contre les axiomes universels modernistes impose des prérequis méthodologiques à la thèse, celle-ci se doit alors d'être fondée sur une solide base épistémologique. Ainsi, la thèse s'appuiera sur l'herméneutique philosophique de Hans-Georg Gadamer comme fondement épistémologique. Puisque la thèse partira de la présupposition de la nation comme concept, celle-ci se basera sur les réflexions conceptuelles et méthodologiques de l'Histoire du Concept de Reinhhart Koselleck. La thèse fera appel à deux types de sources d'analyse. En vue de comprendre la nation du point de vue du régime politique Oromo durant le XVIème siècle, la thèse s'appuiera sur quelques sources primaire mais surtout un grand nombre de sources secondaires. Les sources comprendront des écrits produits entre le XVIème siècle et le XXIème siècle, en complément desquelles, certains matériaux ethnographiques relatifs aux Oromo recueillis par divers auteurs après le XIXe siècle seront également utilisés. La thèse s'appuiera également sur un corpus de littérature européenne produite depuis la seconde moitié du XIXème siècle et traitant des questions de la nation et du nationalisme.

Enfin, la thèse conclura son entreprise en émettant quelques suggestions. Tout d'abord, le concept de tribu n'est pas méthodologiquement approprié pour être utilisé comme appareil conceptuel dans la représentation de l'organisation sociale et politique de la société Oromo du XVIème siècle. Ensuite, les concepts de nation et d'entité ethnique à un certain niveau se chevauchent, il n'est guère possible d'en délimiter clairement les limites conceptuelles et empiriques entre les deux concepts lorsque compris du point de vue de la spécificité des Oromo du XVIème siècle. Enfin, le point de vue moderniste qui prétend comprendre la nation comme simple conséquence logique de la période moderne n'est pas valide lorsque l'histoire mondiale est considérée comme la source d'autorité.

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Chapter 1

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

Ethiopia has been considered as a unique country throughout Africa.[1] Though many traits are attributed to the uniqueness that is associated with Ethiopia, perhaps the most enduring trait that enabled Ethiopia to be viewed as such is the fact that it had never been under European colonial rule.[2] Ethiopia is located in the Northeast part of Africa, or to be more precise, in the region commonly known as the Horn of Africa. As one can see from the map presented below, Ethiopia shares boundary with Eritrea to the North and North-east, Djibouti to the East, Somalia to the South and South-east, Kenya to the South, and the two Sudans in the West. Since Eritrea became an independent state from Ethiopia in 1991, the latter has been devoid of any direct access to the Red Sea.[3]

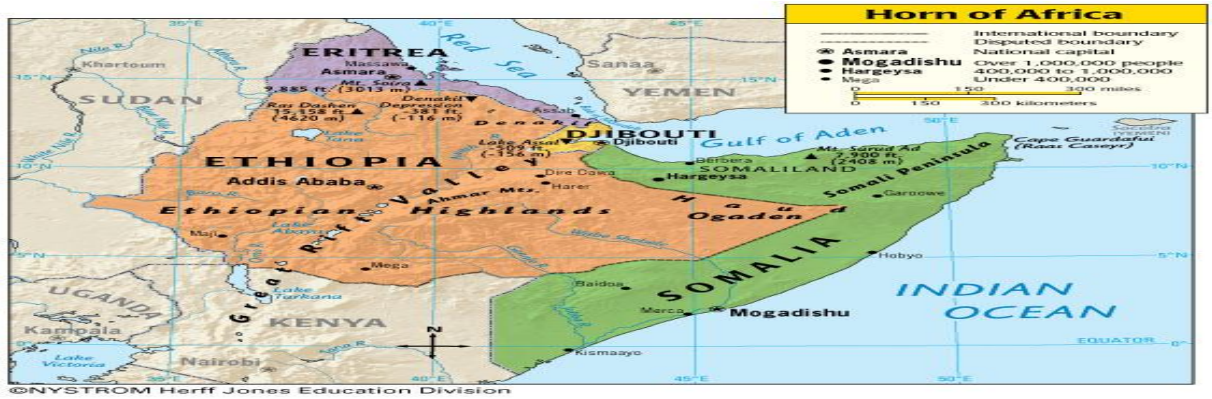

Figure 1: Map showing the Horn of Africa. Sources: http//:google.com.et/pictures/horn of Africa

[1]In his recent book about Ethiopia, John Markakis notes, "Native and stranger alike commonly describe Ethiopia as a country that is unique on the continent of Africa. The encomium of its uniqueness traces a long past that reaches back to classical times…" Cf. John Markakis, "Introduction," *Ethiopia: Anatomy of a Traditional Polity* (Addis Ababa: *Shama* Books, 2006), 13.

[2]*Ibid*; see also Michael Glover, *an Improvised War: The Abyssinian Campaign of 1940-1941*(London: Pen and Sword Books, 1987), 3

[3]See figure 1

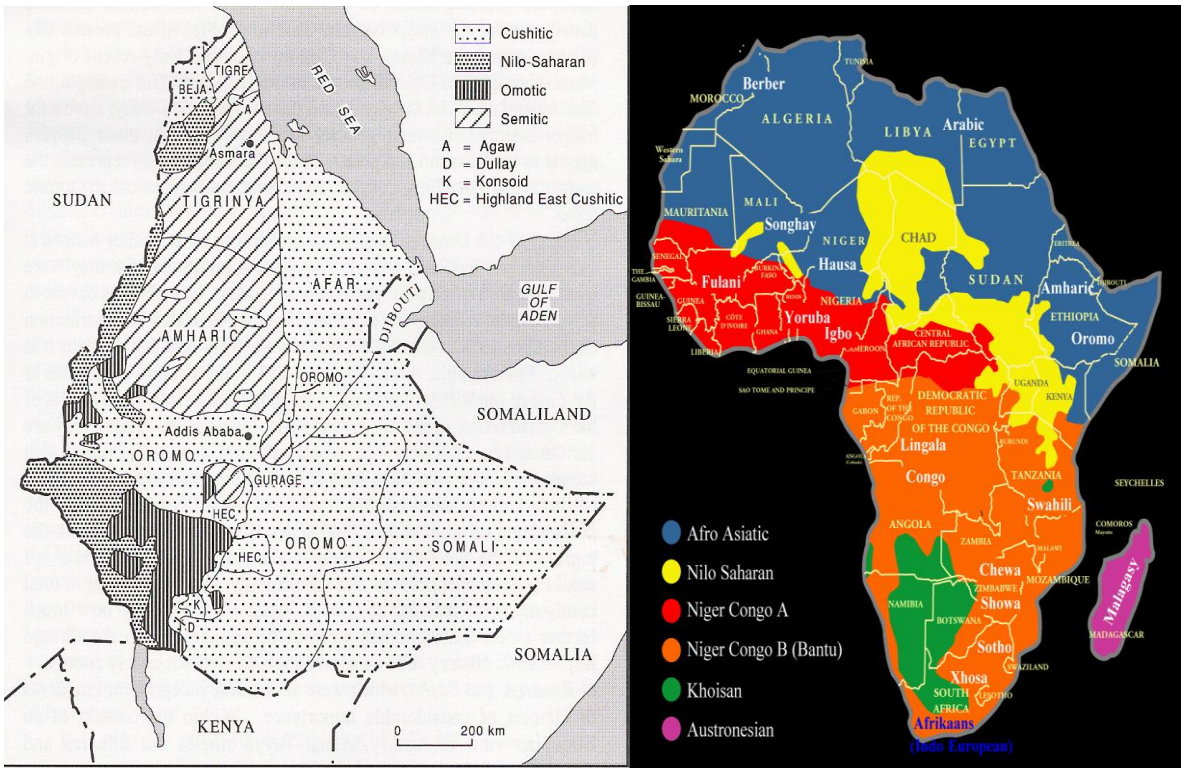

Figure 2 & Figure 3: Two Maps showing language distributions in Ethiopia [in the left] and Africa [in the right].Source: Google.com/images/language distributions and families in Ethiopia and Africa.

Ethiopia has been home for diverse kinds of socio-cultural groups since at least the last decades of the 19th century.[4] The preamble of the current constitution that is ratified in 1994 stipulates that the country is home for nations, nationalities and peoples. The Oromo are one of those nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia who have established the current Federal Ethiopian State according to the same constitution. The *Oromia* Regional State, which is named after its inhabitants, is the largest among the constituent federations both in terms of population and territorial size.[5] *Afaan* Oromo is the working language of the federation. The language, according to linguistic classifications, is a Cushitic stock of the

[4]This issue is one of those bones of contentions characterizing the current Ethiopian historiography. Before the current statuesque, there was a kind of holly alliance between the architects of mainstream Ethiopian historiography and the Ethiopian state. The then historiography sponsored by the state established a kind of Meta narrative which traces the existence of the Ethiopian state as far back as three thousand years. Yet, the current state and proponents of counter historiographies have challenged the unitary model superimposed by the Meta narrative of mainstream historiography. According to proponents of counter historiographies, the Ethiopian state as an overarching political institution lying over the current political territory is a mere logical outcome of the political dynamism which happened during the late 19th century. Cf. Christopher Clapham, "Rewriting Ethiopian History," *Annales d' Ethiopie* 18, no.3 (2002), 37-45; see also Pietro Toggia, "History Writing as a State Ideological Project In Ethiopia," *African Identities* 6, no. 4(2008),319-338.

[5]According to the 2007 Population census of Ethiopia, the four largest Ethnic/Nations are Oromo 34%, *Amhara* 26.9 %, *Tigrie* 6.1 %, and Somali 6.2 % out of the whole Ethiopia population which is about 74 million. Cf. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission, *Ethiopian Population Census: 2007*(Addis Ababa: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission, 2008), 10-16. See also figure 2.

larger Afro-Asiatic language family in Africa.[6] Though the current constitution does not officially ascribe a nation, nationality or people status to any of the contemporary Ethiopian societies, there appears to be a popular consensus that considers the Oromo a nation due to their large size of population.

Figure 4: Federations of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. According to the 1994 Ethiopian Constitution, there are 9 Regional States that are listed in the map. In addition, there are also two City Administrations that are governed by charter from which their municipal autonomy emanates. These are the cities of *Addis Ababa* and *Dire Dawa*. Source:-http//:google.com.et/pictures/regional states/Ethiopia

In addition, the current constitution neither defines nor clarifies what it means by nation or nationality.[7] Yet it has to be noted here that our current endeavor has nothing to do with contemporary political discourse in Ethiopia. Being inspired by the theoretical and empirical loopholes within the modernist paradigm of nation and nationalism studies, the current thesis sails to the 16th century in pursuits of a mere epistemological endeavor.

The thesis will aspire to understand whether nation is a mere logical outcome of the modern period that is the historical specificity of Europe, as widely asserted by modernist scholars or

[6]Almost all languages in Ethiopia belong to Afro-Asiatic language family which is one of the five language families in Africa. Afro-Asiatic family has further braches in Ethiopia. The main one are: *Cushetic*/*Hametic*, *Semetic* and *Ometic*. Outside these three, there are some languages in Ethiopia that are classified as Nilo-Saharan. While the *Afaan* Oromo is grouped within Cushitic sub-division of Afro-Asiatic language family, *Amharic* and *Tigrigna* belong to the other sub-division, the *Semeti*c branch. See figures 2&3.

[7]Some critiques of the current federal arrangement blame the statuesque as a mere imposition of Stalinist perspective of nation and nationalism in the Ethiopian socio-cultural and political fabrics. To what extent does such criticism is justified is a matter of debate by itself. After disproving a number of possibilities that seems to characterize a nation, Stalin comes up with his own synthesis. According to Stalin, "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture." Cf. Joseph Stalin, "The Nation," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 18-21.

whether nation can be disentangled from the modern period and retraced into the pre-modern era. The thesis will not only attempt to understand a nation from a different temporal perspective, but also in a different spatial, that is, African context, by using the history of the Oromo during the 16th century as a vantage point.

Before proceeding further, it is important to situate the thesis within the context of its own fore-tradition. As the thesis uses the historical specificity of the Oromo polity during the 16th century as its empirical reservoir, it is important that any new interpretation it presents should be seen as the outcome of the historiographical and ethnographic tradition that concerns the Oromo. Moreover, given its dependence on the theories of nation and nationalism in understanding its subject, the thesis should also be considered as the outcome of the European tradition as far as the idea of the nation is considered.

To put it otherwise, by combining the European fore-tradition of the nation with the historical and ethnographic fore-tradition relating to the Oromo, the current thesis seeks to represent a new 'fusion of horizon' in the field(what we mean by 'fusion of horizon' will be explained in the forthcoming chapter). On the basis of such commitment, therefore, the current chapter will attempt to accomplish two basic objectives: to briefly introduce some issues concerning Ethiopian historiography in relation to the Oromo people; and to highlight some of the major debates in the field of nation and nationalism.

1.1 Some issues of Ethiopian historiography with particular emphasis on the Oromo people: A brief overview

There have been fierce debates concerning the origin of the Oromo.[8] When the debates are analyzed, one can notice that almost all debates take the 16th century as their chronological takeoff.[9] One question might be raised at this point: Why is the history of the Oromo discussed only from the 16th century on? Given that the Oromo have only recently developed

[8]Cf. Alessandro Triulzi, *Oromo Traditions of Origin(n.p.,n.d),593-601*; Charles T. Beke, "On The Origin of the Gallas" *Reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1847),3-33; Jan Hultin, *The Long Journey: History, Descent and land among the Mecha Oromo*(Uplassa: Uplassa University, 1987),1-36; Herbert S. Lewis, "The Origin of the Galla and Somali," *Journal of African History* 2,no.1(1996), 27-46; Ulrich Braukämper, "Oromo Country of Origin: A Reconsideration of Hypotheses," in *6th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies at Tel-Aviv, ed.* Gideon Goldenberg (Addis Ababa, 1986),25-40

[9]*Ibid*.

a written language, which is based on the adoption of Latin alphabets, before the 20th century, there are rarely any previous accounts on their history written from an insider perspective. Thus the Oromo are like the other subject peoples in Southern Ethiopia who did not have a written culture until recent times; their past had been thus partly preserved in the community's collective memory through oral traditions.[10]

In addition, their past had partly been recorded or mentioned in the written accounts basically from the written culture that developed in the northern half of present day's political map of Ethiopia. Before historical writing became a profession in Ethiopia in 1960s, the two most important written accounts of the past for present day Ethiopia are hagiographic accounts and royal chronicles. Whereas the former were meant for reflecting the values of the Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity, the latter were written mainly as means of praising their patron kings. Such unwavering loyalty to their respective patron institutions resulted in a "decidedly political and religious bias."[11] Consequently, the Oromo and other subject peoples in Ethiopia were not only mentioned rarely but were also treated as "others."[12]

[10]As far as the Oromo are considered, the following discussion on Oral historiography is important in this case. Emergent Oromo historiographers are capitalizing on Oral traditions to negate distortions and filling in the existing gaps. In light of such endeavor, Tesema Ta'a argues how much Oral historiography is important for the Oromo for the same reasons we have disclosed in the text. Tesema cited two different passages from different authors to make his case. Since I found the two quoted passage very illustrative of the point I am making, I would like to present the two passages here. The first one is from Jan Vansina who is renowned scholar in the fields of Oral historiography. Vansina states, "In those parts of the world inhabited by people without writing, oral tradition forms the main available sources for reconstructions of the past, and even among people who have writing, are based on oral traditions. Thus, a claim for the practical utility of research on the specific characteristics of oral tradition, and on the methods for examining its trustworthiness, is doubly substantiated." The second passage is from Asafa Jalata who is a politician by training but with keen interest to Oromo historiography. Jalata confirms, "For generations, the Oromo have transmitted their history mainly through Oral discourse…we lack documented information [about Oromo history-mine]. The Oromo historiography requires a thorough and critical study of oral traditions. For the Oromo, 'each time an old man [or a woman] dies a library is lost." For both quotations, refer to Tesema Ta'a, "Oral Historiography on Oromo Studies," in *New Trends in Ethiopian Studies: Papers of the 12th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies Presented in Michigan State University,* ed. Harold G. Marcus and Grover Hudson (New Jersey: The Red Sea Press, 1994), 981. Compare also, Maurice Halbwachs, "Chapter 3: The Reconstruction of the Past," in *On Collective Memory*, trans. and ed. Lewis A. Coser (Chicago: Chicago University, 1992), 47-49.

[11]Cf. Bahru Zewde, "A Century of Ethiopian Historiography," *Journal of Ethiopian Studies*, vol.33, no.2 (2000), 1-5.

[12]To see as to why and how the Oromo were depicted as "others" in Ethiopian Written Sources, the following quote from Mohammed is very illustrative: "During the sixteenth and subsequent centuries much was written on the military conflict between the Oromo and the medieval Christian kingdom of Abyssinia. The Oromo were generally described simply as 'the enemies of the Amhara' and what was written about them by the Christian chroniclers mainly expressed the intense prejudice which was deeply rooted in Abyssinian society… The Ethiopian ruling class even succeeded in elevating its anti-Oromo prejudice to the plane of state ideology, which was uncritically repeated in the name of scholarship." See Mohammed Hassen, *the Oromo of Ethiopia: A History 1570-1860*(New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 1994), 1-2.

As a result, the history of the Oromo people has been either distorted or belittled.[13] There are three possible reasons for this. First, records about the Oromo have been written from an outsider perspective, and as such are likely to reflect outsiders' values implicitly or explicitly imposed on the subject matter; second, the authors' background, motives and orientations inevitably result in selectivity of events; and finally, the fact that the Oromo has been the largest entity in Ethiopia in terms of population, natural wealth and territorial extent made it likely that their past has been distorted to further political-economic ends[14]

[13]It is important to see two examples as to how the Oromo and other subjected peoples were either pushed into the corners of Ethiopian historiography or their history has been belittled. Two quotes will be presented to illustrate the point that is being discussed. The first quote to be presented here is the notorious expression about the Oromo that is quoted almost in all historiographical reviews concerning Oromo. The one that is quoted by Hassen claims that "the *Galla*[Oromo] had nothing to contribute to the civilization of Ethiopia, they possessed no material or intellectual culture, and their social organization was at a far lower stage of development than of the population among whom they settled."See *ibid*, 2. The other quote to be presented here is from Hussein Ahmed who is renowned scholar in the historiography of Islam inside Ethiopia. As a response to some biased scholarships towards Ethiopian Muslims by some authors like J. Spencer Trimingham who claims, "Islam in the region would have no history without Abyssinia," Ahmed argues opposing such views as: "Such statements…are not unusual. They are part of the long-established historiographical prejudice which has been a common feature of most of the available works dealing with Islam in Ethiopia. The main basis for the views expressed regarding Islam in Ethiopia is the conventional distinction they and many other writers have often made between what they refer to as 'historic Abyssinia,' which is Semitic and Christian, and Ethiopia, which as a broad and political and geographical unit made up of diverse peoples, emerged much later. See Hussein Ahmed, "The Historiography of Islam in Ethiopia," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1(1992), 15-17.Though some writers used Abyssinia as synonymous to Ethiopia, it assumes a different place within the contours of Ethiopian historiography. According to these debates, the term Abyssinia has limited application connoting to the political tradition in the Northern Part of the country whereas Ethiopia connotes to the wider area and society under today's political territory of the country. While some argue that the Ethiopian state is a direct continuity of the former Abyssinian political tradition, others argue in the opposite calming that Ethiopia super-imposed itself upon rather distinct entities of the North and the South using the Abyssinian state craft only after the second half of the 19th century.

[14]Historical sources show that the ruling Abyssinian elite had deliberately written off the Oromo from its Meta-narratives of the Ethiopian polity which professed three thousand aged civilizations. On the contrary, the Oromo were told as strangers in a form of *enmass* immigrants until very recently. Currently, this issue has been resolved decisively owing to strong historical evidences which negate such distortions. Cf. Eike Haberland, "*Galla Sud-Athiopiens*," in s*ummarized English Translation by Institute of Ethiopian Studies'* mimeographed copy, IES/A/68(1970),1-17. The question is, what was the motivation behind manipulation of history by the hegemonic Abyssinian elites vis-*à-vis* the Oromo? In addition to some of the points mentioned in the text, the Oromo also form the heart of Ethiopia from the point view of their geographical location within Ethiopia. Owing to their location at the center of the country, the Oromo serve as a geographical bridge between every other regional communities of Ethiopia. Under the current federal arrangement, the *Oromia* Regional State shares boundary with all federations, but *Tigeray* Regional State that is located in the northern corner of Ethiopia. If the Oromo were to break up from Ethiopia as propagated by few Oromo nationalists, it would mean total dismemberment of the Ethiopian State. Foucauldian's interplay of power/knowledge seems working behind the scene of such political strategy in manipulating historical truths by the hegemonic elite. Cf. Nick J. Fox, "Foucault, Foucauldians and Sociology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 49, no.3 (1998), 146. Such scenario based on Foucauoldian interplay of power and knowledge is not without base. Though the current thesis does not look upon the source at our disposal in this particular case as conclusive evidence, the source is sufficient enough to have such claim at the level of scenario. The source is based on the testimony of General Taddess Biru who is a renowned Oromo Nationalist figure. According to this source, the General joined Oromo nationalist association only after being informed unintentionally from the ruling circles concerning the ruling elite's conspiracy to discourage the Oromo from being a force that could threaten the Ethiopia state before 1974. Cf. Olana Soga, *Gizit Ena Gizot: Mecha-Tulema Meredaja Mahiber* [Amharic] (Addis Ababa, 1993), 25.

Currently, there is a lack in Ethiopia of a common historiographical platform to reconstruct and interpret the past. We have at least two main trends in this regard: Mainstream historiography and Counter/Alternative historiographies. The former has developed a kind of historical meta-narrative that traces Ethiopia's past back to the era before the birth of Christianity. This historiographical school uses the continuity of the Ethiopian state between then and now as its historiographical foundation.[15]

The alternative camps, on the contrary, consider the Ethiopian state with its present day territorial extent as mere logical outcome of the 19th century, during which modern Ethiopian state has emerged by merging the otherwise autonomous political units in today's Sothern and Northern portion of the country. Within this camp, we find emerging historiographies, namely, Eritrean historiography, Islamic historiography, Oromo historiography and so on.[16] The past is a shared battlefield for both the mainstream and the alternative historiographical camps. They also use more or less the same sources, that is, Abyssinian written accounts. The only difference between these two main historiographical traditions is the fact that each tradition treats the past differently so that we have competing interpretations of the Ethiopian past.

As one of the alterative historiographical schools in Ethiopia, the emergent Oromo historiography aspires to throw light on Oromo's past, that is, either neglected or distorted by the mainstream Ethiopian historiographical tradition. Emergent Oromo scholars devote their academic work to overcome these serious shortcomings concerning the historiography of Oromo polity.[17] They have established the Oromo Studies Association that publishes the Journal of Oromo Studies (JOS) since 1993. In his editorial remark marking the first

[15]Clapham, "Rewriting Ethiopian History," 38-41; Toggia, "History Writing as a State Ideological Project in Ethiopia," 320-339.

[16]Clapham, "Rewriting Ethiopian History," 41-45; see also Zewde, "a Century of Ethiopian Historiography,"14-16.

[17]The most outstanding contribution is from Mohamed Hassen who wrote his PhD dissertation on history of the Oromo. His current book which is mentioned elsewhere in the earlier citations was directly adopted from his dissertation with little modifications. His work has been revolutionary in the field of Oromo historiography for it was the first serious historical scholarship on the history of Oromo from an inward perspective. Negaso Gidada's, who served as a president of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia under the current regime, published PhD dissertation is also worthy of mentioning. The book is entitled, "History of the *Sayyo* Oromo of Southwestern *Wallaga*, Ethiopia from about 1730 to 1886". It was published in 1984 at Frankfurt. Since then, young Oromo scholars are mushrooming both at a doctoral and MA level whose studies are focusing on various aspects of the Oromo history. Tesema Ta'a is also among those emergent Oromo scholars who are making a difference in the historiography of Oromo. He was my thesis supervisor while I did my first MA on topic related to the Oromo history.

publication of the Journal of Oromo Studies, Mohammed Hassen expresses his hope that "the knowledge base and research results of the contributors to JOS will serve as indestructible forces for forging a rightful place in history for the Oromo."[18]

One of the issues that have recently been revisited by emergent Oromo historians is the historical debate concerning Oromo's presence in today's Ethiopian territory. These Oromo historians are exerting great effort to go beyond the 16th century into a deeper past. They are using fresh interpretations of existing historical sources that basically consist of Abyssinian royal chronicles and hagiographic sources.[19] To date, nevertheless, the most widely cited written record about the Oromo is the one written by an Abyssinian priest, *Abba* Bahrey. *Abba* Bahrey, who is believed to have lived during the 16th century, wrote the first detailed account about the Oromo.

Most debates concerning the origin of Oromo revolve around the interpretation and reinterpretation of this source. Given that the Abyssinians and the Oromo were fighting each other at the time, one should not be surprised that the Oromo were presented by *Abba* Bahery in a way that reflected an enemy's perspective. As a matter of fact, *Abba* Bahrey opened his record as follows: "I (hereby) begin to… (write about) the Galla[20] in order that I may know the number of their tribes, their zeal to kill people, and the brutality of their (manners)."[21]

Therefore, Oromo's past have hardly been represented in the meta-narratives of Ethiopian historiography. Given such peripheral status in Ethiopian historiography itself, it is thus hardly surprising that the Oromo and other similar societies of Ethiopia received little

[18]Hassen, ed. "Editorial," *Journal of Oromo Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993)

[19]Using exiting hagiographic and royal sources dating as back to the 14th century, some prominent Oromo scholars including some Oromo technocrats in the current regime, claim that there are evidence that throw light on the presence of Oromo in today's central Ethiopia during the 14th century. Cf. Hassen, "The Pre-Sixteenth-Century Oromo Presence within the Medieval Christian Kingdom of Ethiopia," in *a River of Blessings: Essays in Honor of Paul Baxter*, ed., David Brokensha (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1994), 43-61.

[20]*Galla* is a name used to refer to the Oromo in the past though the Oromo never used the term to call themselves. Today, it is derogatory term that no one uses it since it has been considered as an element of civil offence under the framework of the current regime's legal statuesque.

[21]Charles F. Beckingham, trans., "Ethnography of the Galla , by Abba Bahiry," in *Abba Bahery's Essay's: Other Documents Concerning the Oromo, ed.* Getachew Haile(Minnesota: Avon, 2002), 195. The original manuscript was written in *Gee'ez*, a language which is no longer has a significant speaker in Ethiopia but a liturgical language in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This book is of great resource for the current project. It has both an English and Amharic translation to the only primary source concerning the Oromo during the 16th century. Owing to the fact that I am not literate in *Gee'ez*, the availability of those primary documents in Amharic and English translation is indispensable to realize my endeavors.

attention in the annals of world history. This is clearly evident in Kjetil Tronvoll's assessment. "For centuries," he argues, "'Ethiopia' has been equated with the ancient Abyssinian cultures of Amhara and Tigeray, in both governmental presentation and foreign understanding. The range of other ethnic groups in Ethiopia has scarcely been visible, and until recently little interest has been shown towards understanding their cultures and traditions."[22]

2.1 Introducing theories of nation and nationalism with much emphasis on the modernists' view: A macroscopic observation

> The twin phenomena of nations and nationalism have shaped the world we know today and yet they have consistently confounded attempts at systematic analysis. Myriad scarps of proof have been collated and a wide range of different explanatory theories (often contradictory) have been advanced, in attempts to pin down these elusive concepts. Often, definitive answers have seemed within reach, only to fade from view with the arrival of fresh evidence or the advent of newer, seemingly more sophisticated, theories.[23]

The above excerpt is taken from Paul Lawrence's opening paragraph for his book that treats the history of nationalism and its various theories. As he aptly puts it, the twin concepts, nation and nationalism, have always been problematic and thus their conceptual dimension remains as dynamic as it has always been the case. For instance, Tom Nairn, who is a distinguished Marxist scholar of nationalism, highlights the difficulty of the phenomenon in the following way:

> '[N]ationalism'[sic.] in its most general sense is determined by certain features of the World political economy, in the era between the French and Industrial Revolutions and the present day. We are still living in this era. However, we enjoy the modest advantage of having lived in it longer than the earlier theorists who wrestled with the problem. From our present vantage-point, we may be a little more able than they were to discern some overall characteristics of the process and its by-products. Indeed it would not say much for us if we were not able to do this.[24]

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[22]See, Kjetil Tronvoll, "Minority Rights: Reports," *in MRG1*, no. 1, *IES Archives/ 3115*(n.d.), 5.

[23]Paul Lawrence, *Nationalism: History and Theory* (Harlow: Pearson and Longman, 2005), 1.

[24]See Tom Nairn, "The Maladies of Development," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers,* ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 70.

In another occasion, Nairn has craftily showed the inherent internal contradiction within the theory of nationalism. According to Nairn:

> The task of a theory of nationalism-as a distinct from a stratagem for living with contradiction - must be to embrace both horns of the dilemma. It must be to see the phenomenon as a whole, in a way that rises above those 'positive' and 'negative' sides. Only in this fashion can we hope to escape from a predominantly moralizing perspective upon it , and rise …[sic] I will not say to a 'scientific' one, as this term has been subjected to so much ideological abuse, but at least to better, more detached historical view of it. *In order to do this, it is necessary to locate the phenomenon in a larger explanatory framework one that will make sense of the contradictions. The question arises of what this framework is. My belief is that the only framework of reference which is of any real utility here is world history as a whole* [emphasis added].[25]

It can be argued that nation and nationalism belong to the highly contested terrains in social sciences and humanities.[26] Owing to their conceptual fluidity, a lot has been suggested concerning their origin, nature, essence and so on. We can observe this difficulty with one of such suggestions if we note the following argument by Craig Calhoun. According to Calhoun, "nationalism is too diverse to allow a single theory to explain it all."[27] In his view, "much of the contents and specific orientation of various nationalisms is determined by historically distinct cultural traditions, the creative actions of leaders, and contingent situations within the international world order."[28]

Anthony Smith also remarks that "the history of nationalism is as much a history of its interlocutors as of the ideology and the movement itself."[29] Smith thus highlights that what we know about the phenomenon that is referred as nationalism could also be in part the

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[25]I have made the emphasis to the last sentence of Nairn for two reasons: one, partly because I share his conviction that world history as a whole has to be used as the only real sources of authority for theories of nation and nationalism, two, partly because Nairn's conviction will render a methodological leverage for more or less similar suggestions that my thesis will make at different stages of the forthcoming chapters. To have an original view from Nairn, cf.Narin, The Break-up of Britain," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, vol.1, (London: Routledge, 2000), 290.

[26]Christophe Jaffrelot, "Types and Theories: For a Theory of Nationalism," in *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes,* ed. Alain Dieckhoff and Christophe Jaffrelot (New York: Palgrave and Macmillan, 2005), 10-11.

[27]As quoted in Jafferlot, "Types and Theories," 10-11.

[28] *Ibid*, 10.

[29] Anthony Smith, "Nationalism and Historians," in *Mapping the Nation, ed.* Gopal Balakrishnan (London: New Left Review and Verso, 1996), 175.

outcome of intellectual construction. In light of this point, Smith argues that "exactly because it appears so protean and seems so elusive, nationalism reveals itself only in its various forms, or rather the forms given to us by its proponents and critics."[30]

Though a lot seems to have been produced so far concerning these issues, achieving any kind of comprehensive or overarching theory that could resolve existing controversies remains questionable.[31] Despite a number of journals and readers on nation and nationalism have been published, Christophe Jeffrlelot still believes that the twin concepts continue to present a puzzle for the social sciences. Though nation and nationalism remain enigmatic, Jaffrlelot rejects any skepticism infused into the field by the likes of Calhoun and John Hall. John Hall argues for example that "no single, universal theory of nationalism is possible. As the historical record is diverse, so too must be our concepts."[32] In response to such skepticism towards a universal theory of nationalism, Jeffrlelot reacts with the following argument: "What is at stake here is the very mission of social sciences, which are supposed to use, or build, concepts applicable to different contexts and situations. It is certainly high time to react against such aggressive tendencies which would take us back to pre-analytical, typology-oriented forms of social sciences."[33]

The debate that has been shown awhile ago is one instance among numerous other kinds of theoretical and historical debates in the field of nation and nationalism. If we dare to present such diverse views and counter opinions in the field, there will not be an end to such a task. For the sake of space and scope constraint, thus it is better to classify or categorize those different arguments and counter arguments into some kind of analytical typology that can be helpful to introduce the conceptual terrain of nation and nationalism.

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[30] *Ibid.*

[31] The issue seems gaining attention across disciplines and some journals and readers are being devoted to the study of nation and nationalism. Jaffrelot lists a number of readers and journals that have been produced in the field of study as follows: "*Nation and Nationalism* (Cambridge University Press and then Blackwell. Oxford)was born in 1995 and *National Identity*(Macmillian) in 1999; …*The Nationalism Reader*(New Jersey, 1995) edited by Omar Dahbour and Micheline Ishay, *Nationalism*(Oxford, 2000)edited by John Hutchison and Anthony Smith, *Becoming National: A Reader*(Oxford, 1996), edited by Geoff Eley and Girgor Suny...*Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*(Oxford, 2000), edited by Athena Leoussi and Anthony Smith." See Jaffrelot, "Types and Theoreis," 10.

[32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid*, 10-11.

Even though one may find also other works that have made taxonomy of different theories of nation and nationalism, the current chapter departs from Anthony Smith's meta-theoretical work *Nationalism and Modernism* to give a brief theoretical overview of nation and nationalism.[34] On the basis of Smith's meta-theory, thus we can classify the works that have been produced in relation to nation and nationalism into three main broad schools of thought. These are the dominant views of the Modernists camp[35]; the alternative views of the Perennialists /Primordial thinking; and the third alternative, the Ethno-symbolic approach.[36]

Modernist Paradigm: The theoretical crux of this paradigm is twofold: One, nationalism is the product of the modern period, which is historically understood as a period that has come into being in Europe after the second half of the eighteenth century.[37] Second, nations are mere creations of nationalism, which is understood either as a political movement or as a doctrine.[38] When introducing the modernist paradigm in their book, Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac note that "in order to provide a brief overview of the modernist theories, it will be necessary to concentrate on themes that these theories have in common, rather than to attempt futilely to demonstrate the richness of each theoretical approach."[39]

According to them, modernists can be roughly dived into two sub-divisions: "on the one hand, those who see the period of transition to modernity as a set of processes that led

[34]Though it may help to lean into Smith's reputation owing to his unsurpassed contribution to the field of study as justification for my choice, Smith's influence in my way of thinking and understanding of nation and nationalism is, however, the real reason why I have chosen his meta-theoretical work among few others.

[35]It is important to note here that "Literature on nations and nationalism tends to label modernism as the most dominant approach to the study of these phenomena [nation and nationalism]," as Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac's argue, "The dominance is explained not only by the sheer number theories who call themselves modernists, but also by the apparent explanatory potency of these theories." See Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism: Introduction," *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism*(London: Routledge, 2005), 9

[36]Yet, it has to be noted that the boundaries among each of these schools are not neat and clean. Since the schools are a mere conventional schematization of the diverse views and arguments in the field of nation and nationalism,

[37]Such conception is based on three pillars of the modern period: Industrial revolution; the French Revolution; and the Enlightenment movements. As far as nation and nationalism are considered, the first two are taken as a foundation when modernist argues that nationalism is the product of the modern period.

[38]Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*: *A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism* (New York: Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2003), 22-23; see also Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism,"9.

[39]Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism," 9.

towards the system integration and, on the other, those that emphasize processes of socio-cultural integration." In the former sub-category, the work of Ernest Gellner's *Nation and Nationalism* is mentioned as the most prolific contribution.[40] For Gellner, nation as a unified socio-cultural entity having its own state is only conceivable during the modern era. He argues that the objective conditions during the pre-modern world were in no way conducive to facilitate or support either the formation or the existence of the phenomenon referred as a nation. To further highlight Gellner's view concerning the last point, let's us borrow some lines from Gellner himself and state his central argument here. According to him, "the great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way round."[41]

In the same category, there are others who emphasize military and administrative expansions and the centralization of the state as key to the transition to the modern society *vis-à-vis* Gellner's material precondition. John Breuilly is one of those prominent scholars that give primacy to the modernization of the state craft as key for the reconstruction of the society in a new model. For Breuilly, there are three pillars on which all nationalist arguments are founded. According to him, these pillars are the following: "(1) There exists a nation with an explicit and peculiar character. (2) The interests and values of the nation take priority over all other interests and values. (3) The nation must be as independent as possible. This usually requires at least the attainment of political sovereignty."[42]

Those who view "nation and nationalism as a vehicle for the processes of socio-cultural integration of modern societies," include such prominent scholars as Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson. Such socio-cultural integration occurs either at the level of ideas or "through the means of communications," so that some kind of 'national consciousness' can be forged along horizontal and vertical planes. According to Hobsbawm, nations are part and parcel of the invented traditions of nationalist projects.[43]

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[40]Cf. *ibid*, 9-10.

[41]See Ernest Gellner, "Nations and Nnationalism" in *New Perspectives on the Past*, ed. R. I. Moore (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 54-55; see also Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, "Modernism,"9-11.

[42]A quoted in Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism,"9-11.

[43]Cf. Eric Hobsbawm, "The Nation as Invented Tradition," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 76-83; to read invented tradition in its

On the other hand, Anderson through his widely acclaimed publication, *Imagined Communities*, rebuffs the real existence of a nation. Using print capitalism as its main methodological foundation, Anderson claims that nation is the result of imagination of the literate section of the modern society. If we have to consider nation as a community that is tied up with reciprocal nature of sentimental bond, then such reciprocal bond can only be possible at the level of imagination of those literate individual members of the same nation.[44]

As far as the taxonomy we are using now is considered, Hobsbawm's and Anderson's works fall entirely into the modernist schema. Yet, the moment other kinds of normative typology are taken into consideration, as for instance one that differentiates between modernism and post-modernism, then these two works would rather fall into the second kind of typology.[45]

All modernist theories hold either overtly or covertly that the two phenomena, that is, nation and nationalism are highly embedded in European historical context. Their presence outside Europe is partly considered the outcome of diffusion of ideas in which nation and nationalism representing a part within the larger package of modernity. According to the diffusion model, the whole colonial apparatus; colonial state, colonial officials, elites of the colonial subjects have played their own role by facilitating these two twin phenomena to diffuse from Europe to Africa and elsewhere, either through the process of transplantation or imitation.

As far as Africa is considered in such diffusion model, John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith note that "the inauthenticity of nation-state models to African circumstances has long been a matter for debate, with scholars decrying European empires for creating state

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original context, see Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Tradition," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[44]To further elucidate Andersons view, some lines have been taken from his book and presented here. Anderson posits, "If the development of print-as-commodity is the key to the generation of wholly new ideas of simultaneity, still, we are simply at the point where communities of the type 'horizontal-secular, transverse-time' become possible. Why, within that type, did the nation become so popular? The factors involved are obviously complex and various cases can be made for the primacy of capitalism." Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 37.

[45]In relation to the point that is discussed in the text, the following remark from Smith is important. For Smith, "post-modern constructivists, reacting against the essentialism and naturalism of nationalism and 'primordialism', see the nation as ultimately a fiction engineered by elites using 'invented traditions' for purposes of social control, as Hobsbawm and Ranger had claimed, or, taking their cue from Anderson, as a novel form of 'imagined community', a discursive formation of linguistic and symbolic practice." See Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009), 11-12.

territorial boundaries inappropriate to the character of the indigenous populations or for imposing western ethnic categories on diverse peoples."[46]

Taking into consideration such kinds of modernists' views, various theories under the umbrella of modernist paradigm are given different labels by their critics. These labels include "structuralist, functionalist, constructionist and instrumentalist."[47] Given that the temporal and spatial locus for the origin of nation and nationalism are located in European specificities, the whole modernist school is blamed for its 'Eurocentric' orientation by its critics. For example, the following quote from Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac is illustrative of the point that has been established awhile ago:

> …it is important to note that unlike primordialists and ethno-symbolists, modernist theories are unavoidably Eurocentric. It was Europe, after all, that experienced changes as its political, economic and social, levels around the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, changes so dramatic that they deserve a label as the beginning of the new era. Theories that offer some explanation of the rise of nations and nationalism in non-European societies…are mainly engaged in applying the developed European model to those communities. Here, the explanation of the emergence of phenomenon such as the nation is firmly grounded in one specific geo-political area in specific historical period marked with an equally specific set of social processes known as modernity.[48]

In a nutshell, the basic modernists's assumptions concerning a nation can be summed up as follows: First, nations are considered as a real sociological entities; second, "they are composed of discrete populations, a given territory, a distinct set of institutions and roles, and parallel, but unique cultures"[49]; and finally they are conceived as "the outgrowth of a linear process of rationalization."[50]

Perennial/Primordial Paradigm: On the basis of the primordial school of thought, some critiques have been aired against the modernists' arguments. But before primordialism has

[46]John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, eds., "Introduction," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, vol.* 3(London: Routledge, 2000), 763-764.

[47]Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds.,"Modernism,"12.

[48]*Ibid*,13.

[49]Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism*, 13-14.

[50]John Hutchison, "Ethnicity and Modern Nations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 4(2000), 651

drawn lately into the debates of nation and nationalism from the fields of Ethnicity, some of primordialists' assumptions were already the organizing principles of nationalists' arguments. Thus one may claim that modernism initially emerged as a critique against nationalists' ideologies. Smith for instance argues that "The oldest paradigm of nations and nationalism, the one against modernism has always battled, is the nationalist. Or rather, one version of the nationalist ideology, the organic version."[51]

Primordialism as school of thought were not originally part of the debates concerning nation and nationalism though part of their thinking were at the bedrock of nationalists' arguments as indicated earlier. The primordial school has been drawn into the field of nation and nationalism from the field of study that focuses on ethnicity.[52] Addressing the issue from a socio-biological perspective, proponents of the primordial school stress the importance of genetic relatedness and biological givens, claiming that both ethnic entities and nations are extensions of kin groups.[53]

Contrary to such biological essentialism, there are others who focus on the cultural given as a central unifying structure for such social realities as ethnic entities and nations. According to these latter groups of exponent of primordial elements, an individual—by the nature of being born to a certain community—develops a bond of attachment with that community. A nation could be defined accordingly as a community of common culture wherein members are tied up with a reciprocal bond, which is necessarily involuntary. In addition, since such primordial ties and bonds are sometimes considered as something sacred, individual choices and independent decision making are downplayed.[54]

On the other hand, the perennial school high lights "the historical antiquity of the type of social and political organization known as the 'nation', its immemorial or perennial

[51]Smith *Nationalism and Modernism*, 146.

[52]Cf. *ibid*, 145-159.

[53]Cf. Pierre Van Den Berghe, "a Socio-biological Perspective," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 96-103; see also Clifford Geertz, "Primordial and Civic Ties," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 29-34.

[54]Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*,145-158.

character."[55] Even if proponents of the perennial school consider nations as historical and social phenomena, they reject natural essentialism, as claimed by their counterparts following the primordial thinking. Although perennialists accept the modernists' view concerning nationalism, as a movement and ideology being an outcome of the modern period, they "regard nations either as updated versions of immemorial ethnic communities or as collective cultural identities that have existed, along ethnic communities, in all epochs of human history."[56]

Primordial thinkers are labeled as essentialists by their critics. In today's scholarly atmosphere, marked by postmodernist critique and a tendency to consider everything in terms of either historical or social construction, the 'essentialist creed' has become a loaded expression that few are willing to be associated with. What is more, both kinds of constructivists' conceptions underpin the inevitability of historical and social dynamism across time and space *vis-à-vis* any essentialist tendency in the social universe. In addition, the primordial schools are also criticized for their failure to give some room for individual agency when they consider the bonds as the result of involuntary behavior of individuals constrained by the perceived sacredness of these bonds.

On the other hand, perennialists are criticized for their fit and knit activity using an abundance of historical examples from the larger canvas of world history. According to their critics, the arguments from the perennial school tend to assume "the form of general assertion accompanied by brief examples."[57] They are criticized for using very scanty historical evidences to justify their position though world history in general is their main source of authority.[58]

As far as the Ethiopian case is considered, I concur with Breuily's criticism against one specific work that belongs to perennialists' tradition. In order to justify why I have taken such

[55]*Ibid.*

[56]*Ibid*

[57]John Breuily, "Dating the Nation: How Old is an Old Nation?" in *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of Theories of Nationalism, ed.* Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac (London: Routledge, 2005), 15-16.

[58]John Breuily, "Dating the Nation,"15-31.As far as Ethiopia is considered, I concur with Breuily's critic about perennialists in relation to Adrian Hasting who is the main authority in the field.

position, I will give some space here to present Adrian Hastings's faulty interpretation and hence improper usage of Ethiopian history to be found in one of his works. Among perennialists, perhaps the most popular figure in the field is Adrian Hasting whose fame has widespread after the publications of his work that is entitled as, *The Construction of Nationhood*.

One of the strengths of Hasting's work is his initiative to bring historical specificities outside Europe into the attentions of nation and nationalism studies. A case in point is a chapter that he devotes for the treatment of non-European specificities. Despite such merits, however, Hasting has either misinterpreted or distorted some aspects of Ethiopian history. To begin with, Hasting begins his presentation of the Ethiopian case by imposing his personal values when he states that some aspects of Ethiopian history are "in some ways unAfrican."[59] Needless to mention that while such qualitative distinction is by itself highly 'Eurocentric,' this is not the main reason why Hasting work has received special emphasis here.

Provided the fact that Hasting has used few sources which are not typical historical ones, as far as the Ethiopian case is concerned, one can easily identify some historical inaccuracies in his interpretations.[60] Firstly, contrary to his claim that the Ethiopian state is one "with a continuous history of 1500 years,"[61] the meta-narrative of mainstream Ethiopian historiography claims 3000 years of continuity, tracing its origin some centuries before the Christian era. Bahru Zewde, who is a prominent figure in the mainstream of Ethiopian historiography, as for example notes in the following manner:

> Conventionally, Ethiopian history began with the visit of the Queen of Sheba, allegedly from Ethiopia, to Solomon, King of Israel, in the tenth century BC: hence the reference to Ethiopia's 'three thousand years of history' that we hear and read so often. Aside from the

[59]He finds the Ethiopian case unique because some Ethiopian institutions in relation to the nature of the state, religion and other aspects are more similar to European context than any other African institution. Hasting claims that "If there is one people in history to have been shaped in its own self-consciousness by the Bible, it is the Ethiopian, with their extraordinary early medieval myth of origin, recorded in the *kebra Nagast*[Glory of Kings], that the Mosaic Ark of the Covenant was carried from Jerusalem, to Ethiopia, by Menelik I, son of Solomon, to constitute their nation as the new Israel." Cf. Adrian Hasting, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 150.

[60]The points that will be raised and discussed at length are focused on Hastings' interpretations in relation to some aspects of Ethiopian history. Cf. *ibid*, 150-151.

[61]*Ibid*,150.

> fact that this association has scarcely any scientific basis, it represents too short a view of the Ethiopian past.[62]

Secondly, it is difficult to justify his claim that there was some kind of 'collective consciousness' that was equally shared by the elites and the masses.[63] One of the widely recognized limitations of mainstream Ethiopian historiography is the fact that it is focused on political narratives to the neglect of the masses and other themes. In such context, it proves a daunting task to establish whether or not there was some kind of consciousness at a popular level as Hasting attempts to show. It is evident that almost all chronicler accounts had been preoccupied with the glory and praise of the patron kings to the neglect of the everyday life of the masses. And as for the hagiographic accounts, the emphasis is on the process of proselytization and praise of the religious figures that played a prominent role in such processes.

Thirdly, the application of religious variant of nationalism on a historical event that occurred in Ethiopia during the 17th century is rather precarious than appealing. The problem is not why he drags the issue to the pre-modern period or to the Ethiopian context. The problem rests whether that specific historical event corresponds to Hastings central argument in his book or not. There was indeed a religious conflict between the followers of the Roman Catholic belief and the worshipers of the Ethiopia Orthodox Church, with the masses on both sides participating in the civil war. Up to this level, Hasting's claim is thus historically acceptable.

It, however, seems plausible that his interpretation of this particular historical case is problematic to some extent. Though the Portuguese were the main architect of the spread of the Catholic faith in the period, *Emperor* Susenyos and some of his dignitaries, including some of his brothers, were among the converts and attempted to play some role in making the Roman Catholic faith an official religion. On the other side, one of the king's brothers was the leading figure of the resistance that ultimately led to a kind of civil war that divided kin groups at different levels of the society.[64]

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[62]Zewde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia, 1855-1974*(1991; repr., London: James Currey, 1996),7.

[64]*Ibid*, 150-151.

The point that needs to be addressed here is, whether we can consider such religious civil wars that were waged among brothers at various levels of the society as one variant of nationalism or not. Religion was at the center of the civil war. Yet, does it seem justified to claim that the type of identity that was forged along religious confessions with the consequent mobilization of the masses constitutes one variant of nationalism? Though there can be some instances in which religion is the base of identity formation and consequently serves as a resource to mobilize the masses in the spirit of nationalism, it is highly precarious to apply such line of reasoning to the 17th century Ethiopian historical case.

Finally, it seems very likely that Hasting has only a scant acquaintance with the richness of Ethiopian history. Hasting argues that "it is hard to deny that the basic characteristics of a nation were present in Ethiopia-though not of course, in the non-Amharic peoples who were conquered by it unless and until they were assimilated into its religions and linguistic unity."[65] In his view, "Becoming a Christian meant becoming Amharic."[66] For one thing, the process of conquest only occurred after 19th century. Before this, Ethiopia did not yet exist within its present day political boundary. Rather, the territory was home for a number of independent and semi-autonomous political units[67].

For the other thing, *Amharization* as an official assimilation state policy occurred rather late, in the 20th century.[68] When *Amharization* had been fully implemented after 1941, the intention of the then Ethiopian regime was to mold a single, unitary, homogenous Ethiopian nation at the expense of the richness of Ethiopian diversity. When such was a case, it was not only those societies in the south that were structurally marginalized, but also non-Amharic societies in the north like the *Tigerean* and Eritreans.[69]

Ethno-symbolism views ethnic entities and nations as part of the same continuum in which the persistence of ethnic relations renders a foundation for the formation of nationhood.

[65]*Ibid*, 151.

[66]*Ibid.*

[68]For a thorough discussion of *Amharization* , See Sisay Megersa, *Amhara-Oromo Ethnic Interaction in Salale, Ethiopia from 1941-2000: Ethnic Dynamism, Ethnicity and Construction of Identity in Salale Area, Ethiopia across three régimes* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009),44-51.

[69]*Ibid.*

Given that ethno-symbolism, like modernism, regards nations as a modern phenomenon, the pre-modern period is considered as *la longue durée* during which ethnic phenomena are considered almost as ubiquitous social and historical realities.

As a means of understanding the process of nation formation, ethno-symbolism gives due regard to the process of ethno-genesis mainly because there is a conviction from the school that modern nations are highly embedded in their ethnic past. Myths of common origin, ethno-national symbols and patterns of communications are seen, by ethno-symbolism, as basic symbolic patterns through which the link between modern nations and their ethnic past could be established. Ethno-symbolism, therefore, grounds the formation of nations to a large extent on the cultural heritage of preexisting ethnic communities.[70]

As an emergent school in the field of nation and nationalism, ethno-symbolism borrows some basic assumptions and theoretical ingredients from all the other schools mentioned so far. Like modernists, Ethno-symbolism considers nationalism as an outcome of the modern era, but rejects the modernists' assertion that nations are a mere logical outcome or by-product of nationalism. Yet, ethno-symbolism shares with modernists when the latter considers nations as real sociological community *vis-à-vis* some post-modernists' works that claim otherwise.[71]

Ethno-symbolism differs from modernists in the following basic points: one, ethno-symbolism gives due importance to the cultural resources and its symbolic derivation *vis-à-vis* the material substructure of modernists; second, nations are not *a posterior* to nationalism in the understating of ethno-symbolism; and finally, ethno-symbolism attempts to disentangle the concept of a nation from a nation-states.[72]

Like the primordial school, ethno-symbolism seeks to understand the subjective and the *inner* dimensions of nations by studying the emotional bond that brings members of a nation in a given reciprocal solidarity. Nevertheless, ethno-symbolism, unlike primordialism, rejects any form of essentialism, either cultural or biological. It departs from situational understanding of

[70]Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism,* 193-198.

[71]*Ibid*, 11-13, 20-21.

[72]*Ibid*, 13-21; see also, Hutchison, 651.

ethnic relations and ethnicity as formulated by Fredrick Barth's *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries.*[73]

Although ethno-symbolism, like perennialists, regards the pre-modern period as a relevant historical framework to understand the process of nation formation, ethno-symbolism differs from perennialists' tradition that views ethnic entities and nations as recurrent social and human phenomena that are ubiquitous throughout recorded history.[74]

[73]Barth rejects the involuntary bond of individuals with an ethnic entity for individuals' actions and behaviors towards their social group are highly situational. He also questions the essentialist tendency of Primordial school having noticed that the substantial elements the ethnic components like language and religion have been in continuous flux. Despite such inherent dynamism, however, Barth believes that the ethnic entities maintain the boundary their ethnic component. These boundaries are instrumental in moderating social interactions using us/them dichotomies. Cf. Fredrik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), 9-17.

[74]Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 181-189.

Chapter 2

Methodological Considerations

My initial experience, which latter developed into the main research questions of the current thesis are the result of my encounter with the modernist horizon of interpretation. The modernist paradigm takes the modern era as an *a priori* to explain nationalism, while relegating nation to a secondary importance as being merely the logical outcome of nationalism.[1] Given that the historicity of the modern era is deeply embedded within the history of Europe, such interpretation implicitly elevated Europe as the origin of nationalism, and by-implication the nation itself.

On the contrary, Africa and other non-European parts of the world are relegated to a peripheral status, depicted as passive receivers of the processes of nation formation and nationalism either as a result of colonial legacy or through other modes of diffusion mechanisms.[2] To what extent is the origin of a nation is embedded in the modern era temporally and in European historicity spatially? This is the main methodological question on which the overall framework of the current thesis is grounded.

As part of the above methodological question, how can we resolve a methodological dilemma of the following nature? On the one hand, there is curiosity to understand the idea of a nation using all theoretical literature in the field, which basically constitute a European[3] discursive

[1]C.f. Christophe Jaffrelot, "For a Theory of Nationalism," *Question de Researche: Center d'études et de reseqrches internationals Sciences Po*, no.10 (2003), 41-43.

[2]Modernist arguments are criticized for their 'Eurocentric" tendencies. Cf. Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism," 13.

[3]These terms such as "Europe" and "European" are very sensitive and are subject of hot debates among historians. We are well aware of how the concept of Europe is intricate as it has been indicated by Delanty who argues, "'European identity, as an ethno-cultural and political project, preceded the formation of the idea of Europe." See Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe* (London: Macmillan Press, 1995), 16. Also with the fluid aspect of the concept of European, we acknowledge the difficulty of the concept. We dare to use both terms here only as a matter of convenience to show that historical realities like industrial revolution, modernism and the French revolution are highly embedded on historical specificity of today's geographical entity represented as Europe, and in particular Western Europe. The same problem occurs also even if we reduce our scale at the level of Western Europe. Whatever the level of difficulty posed here when we make use of either of these concepts, we declare that it is not our intention to reduce the whole Europe in any sort of generalization that can compromise the singularity of individual countries. We are forced to use the terms because both the French and Industrial Revolutions are the benchmarks of the modern period which is more of a 'European' singularity than elsewhere. Thus, the important thing here is the context as to how the terms used. Given that the concepts tend to be very problematic when viewed against each individual European countries, we suggest that to use either Europe or European as analytic tool against the rest of the world to some

unit. On the other hand, there is also a strong desire to understand a nation from a new perspective, leaning on Horn of African, in particular on Oromo's historical specificity during the 16th century. In order to bridge this gap, and look for possible connections between these two tasks, it is indispensable "To Think Methodologically,"[4] to use the apt expression of Paula Saukko. The main task of the present chapter is, therefore, to address this essential part of the thesis. Thus the present chapter is devoted to the task of methodological pondering.

Why does it seem that thinking methodologically is indispensable? We presume that an MA undertaking is part of a research tradition that seeks to generate its justification from the methodological positions it takes. Thus the current section could be considered as the methodological foundation of the present MA thesis. Any methodological position taken in the current chapter needs to justify both the overall structure of the thesis and its various pieces.

In addition, owing to the inevitability of scope delimitation and constraints of other natures, our methodology will be instrumental to maintain a justifiable shape and content for the thesis under discussion. Equally importantly, however, our methodology needs to illuminate the limitations inherent to the current MA thesis. To this end, whenever it seems important and convenient, the thesis will attempt to declare its limitations as part of a self-reflection activity. Yet, it must be underscored that only those limitations of which the writer is aware of at the time of writing this thesis will be highlighted in every moments of reflexivity.

"Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" What is a nation?

Ever since Ernest Renan delivered his famous lecture in 1882; the question that he raised at that platform as part of the title of his presentation, "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*"[5] has remained

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extent reduce the problem and the complexity the concepts pose. In light of such difficulties with the use of 'European', see Trine Flockhart, "Europeanization or Eu-ization? The Transfer of European Norms across Time and Space," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 48, no. 4(2010),787-804; K.K. Patel and U. v. Hirschhausen, "Europeanization in History: An Introduction" in *Europeanization in the Twentieth Century: Historical Approaches*, ed. Martin Conway and Kiran Klaus Patel (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010),1-7. In relation with the difficulty concerning the 'Western Europe' representation, see Alan S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000),1.

[4]Borrowed from Paula Saukko, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to classical and New Methodological Approaches* (London: Sage Publications, 2003).

[5]Ernest Renan, "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" in Nationalism. Oxford Reader*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17-18. Here it must be noticed Ernest Renan was not the

unresolved —even though a lot has been written on the subject matter since then. For instance, a book published in 2005 in honor of Anthony D. Smith on the occasion of his retirement as professor emeritus highlighted some fundamental questions concerning the idea of a nation.

According to the editors of this book, "the foci of the ever-expanding body of literature on nations and nationalism are the four basic questions: 'what,' 'when,' 'why' and 'how.'…What is a nation?; When have nation and nationalism come into being?; Why are there nations and nationalism?; How are nations and nationalism formed?"[6] The book is a proceeding of "the fourteenth annual conference of the Association for the study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN)"[7] which staged a debate in April 2004 under the theme, "When is the Nation?"

Still today, no authoritative work has been produced which can fully address these four focal questions. Competing theories and models have been mushrooming but we still lack an overarching interpretation concerning nations.[8] The current thesis wishes to depart from two questions that appear to be the same at face value, but have in fact different implications from within. The first question is, "When is *a* Nation?" The second is, "When is *the* Nation?" To appreciate the difference, it is useful to consider how John Breuilly contextualized a similar set of questions in order to highlight their respective implications:

> Smith distinguishes the sociological question: 'When is a nation?' from the historical question 'When is the nation?' As a sociologist he gives priority to the first question, considering what he regards as the key ethno-symbolic processes which combine to form nations, before considering the historical record for the formation of specific nations. As a historian I proceed in the opposite direction, asking whether Smith's way of framing the question about nation formation helps in the understanding of particular cases.[9]

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first person to make that inquiry. Few others before him could probably make similar inquiry. As for instance, Guido Zernatto informs us that De master made similar inquiry during the French Revolution. Cf. Guido Zernatto, "Nation: The history of the Word," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, vol. 1(London: Routledge, 2000), 22.

[6]Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism," 1.

[7]*Ibid.*

[8]*Ibid*, 1-13; Jaffrelot, "For a Theory of Nationalism," 10-12.

[9]Breuilly, "Dating the Nation,"15.

It is the interest of the present thesis to adopt Smith's classification, without actually giving a priority to one question over the other. Rather, this thesis seeks to understand the two questions though we dare not claim that a balance between the two perspectives is feasible. Having such position, however, presents another methodological dilemma in itself: How can we understand the nation diachronically without losing sight of its synchronic aspect? Or, the question still remains relevant when it is stated in a reverse manner. What does this imply methodologically?

To maintain a balance between the synchronic and diachronic levels of analysis; Reinhhart Koselleck's seminal work, *Begriffsgechichte* [History of Concepts], is helpful in this case for it provides us with a methodological insights. Before showing as to how Koselleck's work could be connected to the present thesis, it seems plausible to briefly introduce the History of Concepts.

History of concepts, or conceptual history as used variably today by some affiliated intstitutions with history of concepts,[10] "directed itself to criticizing the practice in the history of ideas of treating ideas as constants, assuming different historical forms but of themselves fundamentally unchanging."[11] Thus the main subject matters of conceptual history are those ideas highly embedded in the socio-political and historical contexts. Yet, the ideas *per se* are not the interest of conceptual history. The focus is rather on the changing aspects of those ideas, in particular the difference in meanings represented by the same ideas in time and space.[12]

Working "with a pairs of concepts that are characterized by their claim to cover the whole of humanity,"[13] Koselleck has brilliantly demonstrated how the synchronic and diachronic levels of analysis could be combined. This is one of those methodological insights that the current thesis attempts to capitalize on. It must be stated here that we are aware of the risk when a claim is made to bring the synchronic level of inquiry in harmony with the diachronic

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[10]Cf. http://www.hpscg.org/overview; see also, http://www.concepta-net.org/organization.

[11]Reinhart Koselleck, *Future and Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 81.

[12]*Ibid*, 81.

[13]*Ibid* ,156-157.

one. It has been one of those methodological issues that have dragged historians and sociologists into fierce debates with each other.[14]

Without losing sight on the precarious aspect of the above issue, the current thesis thus attempts to play within a common ground that may help to make such methodological compromise between historical and sociological levels of inquiries. If our inquiry departs from a methodological claim that presumes a nation as a concept representing a given set of socio-historical phenomenon, then such conception plausible renders us the possibility of playing in a common ground that we are aspiring for. To justify the above claim and to illustrate as to how the synchronic-diachronic conjecture could be feasible; the following quoted passages from Koselleck could be very helpful:

> '…in the history of a concept it became possible to survey the contemporary space of experience and horizon of expectation, and also to investigate the political and social functions of a concepts, together with their specific modality of usage, such that(in short) a synchronic analysis also took account of situation and conjecture.'
>
> 'Such a procedure has of the necessity to translate words of the past and their meanings into our understanding. Each history of word or concept leads from a determination of past meanings for us. Insofar as this procedure is reflected in the method of *Begriffsgechichte*, the synchronic analysis of the past is supplemented diachronically. Diachrony has the methodological obligation of scientifically defining a new inventory of past meanings of words.' [15]

How sound is our methodological claim when we consider a nation as a concept representing some kind of socio-historical phenomenon? Though there are some studies that conceive

[14]Among Fernand Braudel's 'Collections on History,' we have quoted here few lines to show the sensitivity of the issue. The quoted passages are from his essay entitled as "History and Sociology." According to Braudel, "In its totality, social reality in flux is ideally, at every instant, synchronous with history, a constantly changing image, although it might repeat a thousand previous details of a thousand previous realities. Who would deny it? " He further goes on to say, "Social time is but one dimension of the social reality under consideration…The sociologist is in no way hampered by its accommodating sort of time, which can be cut, frozen, set in motion entirely at will. Historical time, I must repeat, lends itself easily to the supple double action of synchrony and diachronic: it cannot envisage life as a mechanism that can be stooped at leisure in order to reveal a frozen image. This is a more profound rift…sociologists' time cannot be ours." Fernand Braudel, "History and Sociology," in *On History*, trans. Sarah Matthews (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 76-78.

[15]Koselleck, *Future and Past* ,81-82.

nations as "'real' sociological communities,"[16] we refrain from buying into such conception of a nation at least at this early stage of the thesis. For now, we prefer to suggest a nation as a conventionally sets of representations in relation to some kind of socio-historical phenomena[17] by which we reduce any implication that may appeal to any notion of reality. Whether a nation represents an empirical reality or not needs to be subject of scrutiny by itself.

If we restrict a nation as some kind of socio-historical phenomenon which can only be understood through its conceptual apparatus, then such conception give us the advantage to see into what is represented by the concept and that part of the same phenomenon which is left aloof by the same concept.[18] In other words, we rely on Nicholas Davey's observation when he reminds us that since "an object is always in excess of its concepts, a constellation of conceptual coordinates is required to gain fix on its characteristics."[19] A lot has been written in the field of nation and nationalism in order to highlight various aspects of the phenomenon referred to as a nation.

[16]As it has been indicated in the previous chapter, Smith makes such claim to refute against some 'post-modern' positions namely, Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities" and Eric Hobsbawm's "Invented Traditions". Cf. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism* ,13.

[17]Here we wish to reflect on, what does Smith mean by "Sociological Reality?" Does he mean that the intention to equate it with a social reality? In what sense? As for instance Jonathan H. Turner, Social reality is the social world that is being structured conceptually into macro, meso and micro levels in which socio-cultural societies are categorized within the macro level. Does Smith "Sociological Reality" falls into this category? The other possibility is, Emile Durkheim's "Social facts" that are "forces and structures that are external to, and coercive of, the individual," as defined by George Ritzer. According to Durkheim, any social group falls within his category of social facts. Whichever way Smith was thinking while claiming a nation as a "Sociological Reality," one has to scrutinize, however, the implication of social reality. Does it refer to a socially constructed 'social' reality? One important question has to be addressed here, how do we arrive at the assumption that a nation is a social phenomenon? We have come to such assumption to avoid at this stage a methodological trap that would force us to consider a nation as a social reality. We want this issue to be addressed rather at the end of the current endeavor. The following sources are important in relation to the above discussions. Jonathan H. Turner, *Theoretical Principles of Sociology: Macrodynamics*, vol. 1(New York: Springer, 2010), 12-19; George Ritzer, "Emile Durkheim: Social Facts" *Sociological Theory*, 8th ed. (New York: McGraw Hill, 2011), 77-84; For a counter, see also Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). From a different context, see also, John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

[18]Though it would be too early to drag hermeneutic understating at this stage, to show the inspiration behind our frame of thought concerning the gap between the phenomenon and its conceptual apparatus, we borrow two quotes from Nicholas Davey and present them as follows: Firstly, "Gadamer asserts…that the objects of understating (*Sachen*) are beyond interpretative capture yet each interpretation has the potential of bringing a different *aspect* of its intended objects into view." Secondly, thus "Hermeneutic Understating is ontologically generative: it brings a differential space into being. It is generative space of the in-between that discloses the contrast between our perspective and that of the other. It shows the other to be *other* while revealing our outlook to be distinctively our own." Cf. Nicholas Davey, *Unquiet Understanding: Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 32.

[19]*Ibid*, 32.

It is important to ask here: Do these conceptual constellations and coordinates give us a full picture of the phenomenon under consideration? As it will be justified later both within the current chapter and elsewhere, it is the conviction of the current thesis that some limitations exist in the modernists' understating of a nation. To put it otherwise, the prevailing concepts of a nation, which are the products of modernists' view, are not adequate to fully represent the phenomenon of a nation. It is thus the methodological conviction of the current thesis to highlight theses limitations within the dual aspect of a nation by exposing a gap between nation as phenomenon and the prevailing conceptual coordinates that are understood as a representation of this phenomenon.

Before illustrating the claim that has been made in the previous paragraph, it is helpful to get an insight how Koselleck understands a concept. According to him, "a political or social agency is first constituted through concepts by means of which it circumscribes itself and hence excludes others, and therefore, by means of which it defines itself…concepts are needed within which the group can recognize and define itself, if it wishes to present itself as functioning agency…" [20] Keeping Kosslecks' explanation about a concept in mind, now let us generate an illustration that could possibly highlight the connection with our thesis leaning on some historical cases from European fore-thinkers of a nation.

We draw on some common features from the speeches of Johan Gottlieb Fichte and Ernest Renan who are among the foremost architects of the concepts of a nation. Though these two renowned figures lived at a different time and in different localities, one can possibly draw some level of analogy between them. Fichte gave his speech entitled "'*Address to the German Nation'* whilst Berlin was under French occupation after Prussia's disastrous defeat at the Battle of Jena in 1806, [and] is widely regarded as a founding document of German nationalism."[21] In 1871, France unconditionally surrendered after its defeat by the North German Confederation at the battle of Sedan. As part of the peace treaty concluded between the two parties, France was forced to cede Alsace and Lorraine to Germany. Almost eight decades after Fichte's speech, Renan made his famous speech in 1882.[22]

[20]*Ibid*,155-157.

[21]*Fitche*. *Addresses to the German Nation: Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*, ed. Gregory Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).i-xxxvi.

[22]Renan "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*"

Using the above historical cases in point, some retrospective assumptions of the following nature could be made at the risk of teleological tendency. First, both Fichte and Renan were possibly prompted by their respective historical experiences in which their respective experiences served as relevant contexts in the formulation of a nation from different angles.

This also means that the two fore-thinkers have selectively interpreted history in a way their interpretations provide justification for their respective model of a nation. Second, one can trace from their speeches the categories of "we" and "other" though these categories are not explicitly stated in the case of Renan's speech. Thus one may conjure that the abstract essence of Germany represented the idea of a nation in the mind of Fichte. Likewise, for Renan, France and a nation represented two sides of the same coin whereupon the former represented his empirical resources whereas the latter seems to be the conceptual representation of France in his mind.[23]

We have been interested in the previous two cases primarily because the two cases are instrumental to illustrate as to how some experiences in the past can be translated into a historical context when some important formulations concerning a nation have been made. We are also interested to see as to how the author's socio-historical and political contexts frame his thought and ultimately how a nation which is partly the outcome of the authors' conceptual representation is affected in such a process.

From such perspective, thus, now it seems feasible to show where is the basic link between the present thesis and Koslleck's history of concept. For its methodological insight, the present thesis seeks to capitalize on Koselleck when he insists that a "concept of expectation developed out of a concept filled with experience that had been employed historically or theoretically."[24] Koselleck goes on to say that:

> The simple use of "we" and "you" establishes a boundary and is in this respect a condition of possibility determining a capacity to act. But a 'we' group can become a politically effective and active unity only through concepts which are more than just a simple names or typifications…The concept is not merely a sign for, but also a factor in, political or social

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[23]Cf. Renan's "*Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?*" and *Fichte's address to the German Nation*

[24]Koselleck, *Future and Past* , 273.

> groupings .There are innumerable concepts of this kind which, while being concretely applied, have a general utility. An acting agency might, therefore, define itself as a polis, people, party, *Stand[city]*, society, church, or state …In such cases, a given group , makes an exclusive claim to generality, applying a linguistically universal concept to itself alone and rejecting all comparison.[25]

On the basis of the previous remark from Kosselleck, it is the conviction of the present thesis that the modernist understanding of a nation is 'Euro-centric' for modern Europe is considered as the cradle of the phenomenon referred to as a nation. Through such exclusive claim to universality to the phenomenon of a nation, it has become hardly possible to consider other socio-historical specificities outside modern European context as a nation.

As evidenced in the discussion that has been made so far, Koselleck's work remains very helpful in our endeavor that attempts to understand nation as a concept. His fresh look on temporality as a result of "'Space of Experience' and 'Horizon of Expectation': Two Historical Categories,"[26] has also been an important conceptual tool for us especially while framing the present methodologically focused chapter of the thesis.[27]

As it has been attempted to show, a nation has been first conceptualized leaning basically on German and French empirical generalizations. When we give an emphasis to the significant role the self- representation played in the formulation of a nation, we may claim that from the onset a nation has been used as a mechanism of self-representation that ultimately ends up with a claim to exclusive claim to generality. We may also claim that such formulations that are made on the basis of specific empirical generalizations can be considered as a prelude to the normative order that is today referred as theories of nation and nationalism.

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[25]*Ibid*, 155-156.

[26]Cf. Koselleck, *Future and Past*, 255-275.

[27]One basic question needs to be raised here: To what extent does the present thesis depend on Koselleck's conceptual history approach? Though the present thesis capitalize on some methodological and conceptual insights from Koselleck's history of concept, the thesis slightly rely on Koselleck's history of concept. As for instance, while Koselleck main emphasis is on "The Historical-Political Semantics of Asymmetric Counter-concepts," we are only interested with the concept of a nation in its entirety to be understood hermeneutically. Though concepts like *tribe* and *ethnie* could be counter-posed dialectically in relation to a nation, a nation will remain the sole core concept that takes the lion's share of our engagement. Yet, Koselleck's asymmetric concepts will be very insightful when we try to understand what makes the nation different from either a *tribe* or an *ethnie*. This will be a task that awaits us to be addressed somewhere in subsequent chapters.

The dual aspects of a nation, on the one hand a particular kind of socio-historical phenomenon; on the other hand, a conceptual representation of that kind of phenomenon, are internally in contradiction to each other. This is primarily true because the universal normative order that circumscribes the phenomenon of a nation has to generate its validity from the richness of world history.

In order to resolve such contradiction, a lot has been produced concerning a nation; either theoretically focused ones or kind of empirically induced generalizations. Yet, the yields are still meager as far as we are looking for an overarching theory and universally accepted working definition for the concept of a nation.[28] Nation and nationalism are still as controversial, ambiguous and debatable as they have been so for the past two centuries.[29]

It is within such frame of mind that we seek to understand one of those methodological dilemmas that have been indicated elsewhere before. At the risk of redundancy, let us drag one of these methodological dilemmas here and restate it once again. How can we understand the phenomenon of a nation using a European concept but through the telescope of specific social reality outside Europe? To put it otherwise, to what extent does nation as a universal normative order remain valid when it is understood from the vantage point of the history of the Oromo society during the 16th century?

It must be evident that the present thesis does not pretend to resolve the aforementioned internal contradiction within the dual aspect of a nation. Such a contradiction remains to pose a challenge even for distinguished scholars in the statue of Anthony D. Smith, let alone for the current researcher who is by far short on the required academic levels, research skills and life experience, neither is the scope of the present thesis capable of accommodating a problem of such magnitude.

As a student coming from Africa and encountered with predominantly 'Euro-centric' discourse of a nation, the thesis ultimately reflects the intellectual effort of someone who is caught up in the middle of two different contexts of experiences. There is a contradiction between the conventional understanding of a nation that is predominantly 'Euro-centric' and the kind of African empirical reality from where this student comes.

[28]See Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds., "Modernism,"1-13; Jaffrelot, "For a Theory of Nationalism,"10-12.

[29]*Ibid.*

Thus the thesis can be considered as an effort that seeks to understand the source of such contradiction that is inherent within the concept of a nation. [30] To what extent could such different layers of experience, accumulated in the life span of an individual, be used methodologically[31] for the understanding of the concept of a nation and its inherent internal contradiction?

In order to address the puzzle which is posed awhile before, the present thesis seeks to draw on Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. As a point of transition to Gadamer's hermeneutics understanding, let us first build on J.E McGuire and Barbara Tuchanska's relevant observation concerning the link between the process of concept formation and historical-hermeneutics:

> The process of concept-formation is always shaped by the Hermeneutic Circle: It starts from foremeanings, because which always understand in light of our anticipating prejudgments and prejudices, and their content develops until meanings are established and combined into a new conceptual whole. Foremeanings of a given tradition are either concepts inherited from an older tradition or preconcepts elaborated in opposition to it…So from the historical-hermeneutic perspective, the process of concept-formation cannot be separated from the process of the appropriation of existing concepts.[32]

As a methodological stance, we build on the last few sentences of this passage, leaving those that concern the issue of hermeneutic circle to be discussed later. We would like to capitalize

[30]If the discussion concerning the student's life experiences in the middle of the methodological discussion creates some feeling of discomfort, one may find a comfort in the following quoted passage. A student's life encounter and experiences could be channeled into a relevant hermeneutic experience in his/her bid to understand any subject matter from a given text. As for instance, Chladenius, as quoted by Gadamer, argues that "'interpretation… is expressively intended to remove obscurities in texts that hinder the student from achieving 'full Understating'"" (Preface)." He further maintains, "In interpretation one must accommodate oneself to the insight of the student (102)." Thus the above discussion with regard to the student's encounter with a European Discursive Unit is a basic point of hermeneutic encounter. Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, rev and 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 2004), 183.

[31]For the sake of convenience regarding this issue, the following instances hopefully prove helpful. As for instance, "The Hermeneutic priority of the question," Gadamer asserts that "…the structure of the question is implicit in all experiences. We cannot have experience without asking questions." He then shows as to how our questions lead us to understand meanings in the spirit of hermeneutic experience. Let us see this connection in Gadamer own words. "The close relation between questioning and understanding is what gives the hermeneutic experiences its true dimension…," thus for Gadamer, "To understand a question means to ask it. To understand meaning is to understand it as the answer to a question." Cf. *Ibid*, 356, 367-368. Nicholas Davey who has brilliantly simplified Gadamer's Philosophical Hermeneutics underlines the point which states that "Philosophical Hermeneutics Promotes a Philosophy of Experience." Cf. Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 5-6.

[32]J. E. McGuire and Barbara Tuchanska, *Science Unfettered: A Philosophical Study in Sociohistorical Ontology* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 247-248.

on the connection between concept-formation and the process of appropriation of existing concepts.

As it has been discussed earlier, the process of concept-formation in relation to the issue of "what is a nation?" has been highly embedded in 'European', particularly 'West European' socio-cultural, political, economic and historical contexts, that is, in a European historicity.[33] As the process of concept-formation involves, either overtly or covertly, 'exclusive claim to generality,' as indicated previously with a quote from Koselleck, the concept of a nation has been appropriated into the larger canvas of 'European-self' v*is-à-vis* its multilayered and multidimensional 'otherness.'

Having born and raised in Ethiopia, which is part of the "other" in the context of the above discussion, how can I properly understand the concept of a nation which is no less the expression of the 'European-self'? Such effort brings ultimately an encounter between my experience that has been shaped by the kind of socio-historical specificities in Ethiopia and my expanding horizon of experience which is the result of my exposure to the concept of a nation through my readings of European literature concerning nation and nationalism. While explicating a point from Edmund Husserl's *Phenomenological Research* and its connection with "the concept and phenomenon of the horizon," Gadamer holds that a "horizon is not a rigid boundary but something that moves with one and invites one to advance further."[34]

To make sense of my layers of experience within the ever shifting horizon, it is helpful to notice that "it is experience itself that opens us to the possibility of further experience,"[35] as Gadamer noted. Therefore, I would say that I am driven into the present research endeavor due to those two different layers of my horizon of experiences that are contradictory to each other. This thesis, therefore, should be considered as an attempt to make use of hermeneutic practice in order to understand a nation by merging these two contradictory perspectives about a nation; to understand the predominantly 'Euro-centric' concept of a nation from the vantage point of the specificity of the Oromo polity during the 16th century.

[33]Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac, eds.,"Modernism,"12.

[34] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 238.

[35]As quoted by Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 32.

The ultimate outcome of such understanding of a nation can be referred to as a 'fusion of horizons' in relation to the phenomenon of a nation. What do we mean by 'fusion of horizons?' For reasons of convenience and to justify the possibility of portraying the present thesis as a piece within the backdrop of hermeneutic practice, let us explain these important concepts and few others in a way our endeavor illuminates the connection between our thesis and hermeneutic practice.

In the frame of the above discussion, let us borrow one important question from Gadamer: "What consequences for understanding follow from the fact that belonging to a tradition is a condition of hermeneutics?"[36] The question serves as a transition into the following concepts such as 'Hermeneutic Circle,' 'fusion of horizons,' 'horizon,' 'finitude' and 'vantage points.' Gadamer underlines that "we must understand the whole in terms of the detail and the detail in terms of the whole."

Such interplay between part and whole in the process of understanding is referred as 'Hermeneutic Circle,' to use brilliantly crafted phrase from Martin Heidegger.[37] For Gadamer, Heidegger's hermeneutic circle is a "decisive turning point"[38] as far as hermeneutic understanding is considered. This is because; Heidegger's hermeneutic circle powerfully expounds the context in which the process of hermeneutics understanding can be achieved to a greater extent.[39] Citing Heidegger, Gadamer explains the relationship between hermeneutic circle and tradition in the following way:

> Heidegger describes the circle in such a way that the understanding of the text remains permanently determined by the anticipatory movement of fore-understanding. The circle of whole and part is not dissolved in perfect understanding but, on the contrary, is most fully realized. The circle is not formal in nature. It is neither subjective nor objective, but [it] describes understanding as the interplay of movement of tradition and the movement of the interpreter…Tradition is not simply a permanent precondition: rather, we produce it ourselves

[36]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 291.

[37]*Ibid*, 293.

[38]*Ibid*.

[39]*Ibid*.

> inasmuch as we understand, participate in the evolution of tradition, and hence further determine it ourselves.[40]

Keeping Heidegger's hermeneutic circle in mind, how can we make sense of its application to our thesis? Two points are important here: Firstly, when it has been claimed that the concept of a nation forms an essential part of a European discursive unit, then we implicitly also suggest that European scholars play a pivotal role in formulating the theories of nation and nationalism. This can give us a glimpse into the process by which these scholars have been influenced by their respective 'European' tradition when formulating their theories of nation and nationalism. Their theories have in turn further extended the conceptual understanding of nation and nationalism, which has formed and thus represent an established tradition by itself.

Secondly, and most importantly, the present research endeavor can also be considered as part of the circular movement of understanding of the tradition concerning a nation, but from fresh temporal and spatial perspectives. The current thesis attempts to infuse an African oriented specific fore-tradition of the researcher into an already well-established European tradition that circumscribes the phenomenon of a nation.

Owing to the fact that nation has been predominantly conceptualized by European scholars; it is evident that these scholars have been under the constraint of their respective fore-tradition that is basically embedded in socio-historical specificity peculiar to Europe. This is also true for the current thesis that is the result of the researcher's encounter of a European oriented tradition wherein the concept of a nation is grounded.

Such hermeneutic encounter has come into surface only because the researcher attempts to understand the problem of a nation without being liberated from the shackles of his own fore-understanding that is highly embedded on the tradition derived from the history of the Oromo people. When it is claimed as a methodological stance that the concept of a nation is 'Eurocentric', then through by-implication, it is evident that the current researcher's endeavor is equally 'Afro-centric' for it attempts to understand the concept of a nation from the vantage point of an African perspective.

[40] *Ibid*.

If we declare right from the onset that our position, the methodological stance guiding the current project is 'Afro-centric' endeavor, what kind of implication will this have then on the nature of our endeavor? According to Gadamer, the "consciousness of being affected by history […] is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation…The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it."[41]

The fact that we cannot avoid to position ourselves outside the history that forms an enclave around us, such reality informs us about our inherent limitation that confines our vision and thinking. Using the idea of inherent limitation in human experience as a segue, let us turn to how Gadamer explicates the concept of horizon and its related features. Gadamer argues:

> Every finite person has its limitation. We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon." The Horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking mind, we speak of narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons, and so forth… A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon, whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.[42]

Using the concept of horizon so brilliantly expounded by Gadamer in the above passage, now we can address the question: What do we mean by 'fusion of Horizon?' This question also has to address the dilemma whether our methodological stance is justifiable or not, for being it is motivated by an 'Afro-centric' perspective. Hermeneutic understanding requires one to re-examine the legitimacy of his/her fore-understating when an encounter is made with a text, in our case the vast European literature that deals about a nation.

Such exercise helps the researcher to be well aware of his biased position that distracts his understanding of the concept of a nation. Gadamer insists that the "important thing is to be aware of one's own biases, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus

[41] *Ibid*, 301.

[42] *Ibid*, 301-302.

asserts its own truth against one's own fore-meanings."[43] Once the task of self-understanding is accomplished, the concept of a nation as a European discursive unit can be fruitfully encountered.

In light of the above discussion, Gadamer notes that a "person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to certain meaning..."[44] In such context of the process of hermeneutic circle, every hermeneutic encounter is preceded by a particular projection of meaning on the part of the interpreter, forming a constant process that "constitutes the movement of understating and interpretation."[45]

Throughout the whole thesis, utmost effort will be exerted to encounter the concept of a nation in its "alterity." This is a clear intent of our endeavor to comply with Gadamer's assertion, which warns us that "…a hermeneutic trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity."[46] In such a way, eventually, what is called the 'fusion of horizons' occurs through the process of understanding. The fusion of horizon occurs in dialectical fashion, to mean that the interpreter's horizons are fused to form a horizon of a different level and expanse. The new horizon takes shape the moment the interpreter understands the original meaning of the text and when in turn he adds his own perspective to the process, enriching thus the original meaning of the texts.[47]

To sum up what has been written so far with the goal of positioning the current thesis as a self-training activity in the framework of hermeneutic practice, let us capitalize on the following relevant points. We reassert that the theories that have so far been developed to address the problem of nation and nationalism are the results of socio-historical contexts that are mainly within the confinement of European singularities. This is true primarily because most of the main architects of theories of nation and nationalism are European scholars.

[43] *Ibid*, 271-272.

[44] *Ibid*,269.

[45] *Ibid*,270.

[46] *Ibid*,271.

[47] Cf. *ibid*, 578.

These scholars have been thus under the constraint of their socio-historical milieu which has an impact on their horizon of experience. To illustrate the assertion that has been made awhile ago, Nicholas Davey's argument is important when he explains his phrase, "Finitude of All Thought and Experience."[48] Davey strongly argues that a "leitmotif that virtually defines philosophical hermeneutics is the conviction that all human experience is particular and finite."[49] Connecting his argument with Heidegger, Davey highlights his source as, "Faithful to Heidegger's ontological axiom of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*), it maintains that all thought and expression are articulated within historically and culturally specific frameworks."[50]

Therefore, the present thesis is a reflection of the "embattled self" of the current researcher whose 'self' continuously repositions itself in a situation that generates "a polarity of familiarity and strangeness"[51] in its encounter with the dual aspect of a nation. Such situation of a "polarity of familiarity and strangeness" is articulated as a "being in-between" whereupon "the true locus of Hermeneutics" is located.[52] It should be noted, however, that the intent to bring the present thesis within the shade of hermeneutic practice presents further methodological complexities that we have to be careful of.

How can we resolve the strong textual presence in our effort to understand a nation hermeneutically? Does our endeavor consider a nation as a text when it attempts to employ hermeneutic practice that is focused on textual understanding? As mentioned earlier, we have presumed that a nation has a dual attributes: the concept of a nation and the phenomenon that is believed to be represented by these conceptual coordinates. By using its conceptual coordinates as frame of reference, one can argue that nation has a textual attribute which facilitates the process of understanding of a nation.

If we look into the context in which world history is understood as a text by Gadamer, then through analogy we can extend Gadamer's logic into our case. Before we attempt to extend

[48]Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 20.

[49]*Ibid*.

[50]*Ibid*, 20.

[51]*Ibid*, 15.

[52]Gadamer's argument as quoted by Davey, *Unquiet Understanding*, 15.

Gadamer's logic to our case, it is important to envisage the connection between world history and a nation as in the following way: First, to consider world history and the phenomenon of a nation as some kind of phenomena which are the object of our understanding; second, the concepts of a nation and sources of world history as means towards understanding these phenomena; and third, the need to locate the phenomenon referred as a nation within the larger canvas of world history, or to consider the former one as a part within the latter that can be considered as a whole.

After having such frame of mind, now we can see the importance of Gadamer's argument when he notes that "it is not just that sources are texts, but historical reality itself is a text that has to be understood…Thus the foundation for the study of history is hermeneutics."[53] Gadamer further elaborates his argument in the following manner:

> The context of world history - in which appears the true meaning of the individual objects, large or small, of historical research – is itself a whole, in terms of which the meaning of every particular is to be fully understood, and which in turn can be fully understood only in terms of these particulars. *World history is, as it were, the great dark book, the collected work of the human spirit, written in the languages of the past, whose texts it is our task to understand [*emphasis added].[54]

On the basis of Gadamer's arguments, therefore, we can consider nation as a text, either a phenomenon assuming one particular mode of human existence within the larger canvas of world history or having its own established tradition in the field of nation and nationalism. In this context, the present research endeavor can also be considered as a part of the tradition that seeks to understand the phenomenon of a nation.

On the other hand, we also have to resolve another pressing methodological issue. Why does the present thesis engage merely with a nation and neglects nationalism as if a nation had an exclusive and independent existence within the study of nation and nationalism? How can this thesis reconcile the fact that it mentions nation and nationalism in various places and takes a nation as its sole subject matter?

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[53]Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 196-197.

[54]*Ibid*, 178.

On the contrary, we cannot avoid using the expressions 'nation' and 'nationalism' inside this thesis since most studies consider the two concepts as a twin concepts in the field of nation and nationalism. Thus the treatment of one concept ultimately forces one to mention the other concept at least in some contexts for the two concepts are highly interrelated though they are not universally considered as necessarily interdependent to each other.

On the other hand, we are under a methodological constraint that seriously limits the scope of study at this level of graduate study. Although the researcher has come into the experience of hermeneutic encounter equally against nationalism as well, we have limited our endeavor in such way, therefore, to comply with the delimitation of the scope of the study that have brought us under constraints of time and other practical factors.

According to Elizabeth Anne Kinsella who is a specialist in qualitative research method, "qualitative research is by its very nature informed by hermeneutic thought."[55] She justifies her position by arguing that "given that the emphasis in qualitative research is on understanding and interpretation…and the parallel emphasis is evident in hermeneutic thought, where for instance Gadamer…demonstrates that understanding (*verstehen*) is the universal link in all interpretation of any kind, the connection between qualitative research and hermeneutic thought becomes self-evident."[56]

Once the link between qualitative research and hermeneutic practice has been established, it can be stated that the current research has been grounded on qualitative research method. Our sources consist of texts of various kinds. For our engagement with the concept of a nation, we have been using theoretical literature that constitutes basically part of European discursive unit/ tradition. To understand the concept of a nation from the vantage point of Oromo society during the 16th century, both primary and secondary nature of historical sources has been used.

As a supplement to those historical sources at our disposal, we have also exploited some ethnographic materials that have been collected by some renowned ethnographers as far as

[55]Elizabeth Anne Kinsella, "Hermeneutics and Critical Hermeneutics: Exploring Possibilities within the Art of Interpretation," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 7, no. 3. ISSN1438-5627 (2006), para.1

[56]*Ibid*.

Oromo ethnography is considered. These ethnographic materials help us to understand the working of the *gada* system from the present perspective. Although the symbolic importance of the *gada* system still reverberates among current Oromo generations, the system as a full-fledge indigenous form of local institution has merely survived in some areas of today's *Oromia* Regional State. These ethnographic materials are basically collected from the *Borana* of Oromo whose *gada system* is considered as a prototype of the Oromo *gada* system during the 16th century.

Viewing the current chapter as a foundation for the overall thesis, the other three chapters are harmonized among each other through the current chapter in a way each chapter plays its own respective role so that the thesis in its totality renders a unity of meaning. As an introductory chapter, the previous chapter of the thesis has provided the historiographical context in which human horizon of experience has been finite and limited. As a result of such finitude aspect of human experience, the same chapter has highlighted the inevitable dynamism that highly characterizes the knowledge base in relation to the field of study that considers nation and nationalism as its subject matters.

Chapter three will provide an empirical context to counter the modernist orthodoxy that claims nation is a mere outcome of the European modern period. Chapter three will expose an internal contradiction; that is inherent in the process of understanding of a Nation as a universal phenomenon, but only as a logical outcome of European specificity. Chapter four will build both on the implicit and explicit conjectures of chapter three by illustrating that the socio-historical contexts that have been used as a background in the process of formulating the concept of a nation have basically been European centered.

Consequently, Chapter four will attempt to verify the methodological presumption that states human horizon of experience is limited and finite. In such manner, the overall thesis will show that the modernist spatial and temporal impositions on the phenomenon of a nation are insufficient to have a universal appeal. To have such unity of meaning among different parts of the thesis, and also between the thesis and its parts; therefore, the current methodological chapter is the key through which that unity of meaning can only be achieved.

Chapter 3

Who were the Oromo during the 16th Century?

Empirical and Conceptual Discussions

The present chapter attempts to accomplish two basic tasks: First, to describe the Oromo polity during the 16th century; second, to understand the Oromo polity in the same period by using concepts such as *tribe*, *ethnie* and nation. Corresponding to these two tasks; the chapter consists of two subsections. The first will be a descriptive one, allowing the ethnographic past of the Oromo society to speak for itself.[1]

The second subsection, in contrast, will provide an interpretive discussion, integrating the chapter's descriptive part into the overall argument of the thesis. In so doing, some level of logical coherence will be achieved not only in between of the two subsections, but also among various parts of the whole thesis.

3.1 Oromo's Socio-cultural and Political way of Life during the 16th century: Brief Overview

During the 16th century, the Oromo had a common monotheist religion. They believed in *Waqa*. Karl Knutsson posits a parallelism between Oromo's monotheisms and that of ancient

[1]Inspired by Asmerom Legesse's phrase, "let the ethnography tell." The basic sources for the historical and ethnographic description of the current subsection are past historical sources and current ethnographic materials. As far as the former kinds of sources are considered, we will make use of written historical sources since the 16th century all through the 21st century. I his seminal work about the *gada* system, Legesse has brilliantly brought into light the structural aspects of the Borana ethnography. According to him, since the *gada* system has fully survived and is still practiced in full scale by the *Borana* Oromo of Ethiopia, Legesse argues the *Borana gada* system remains a prototype of the *gada* system during the 16th century. Outside the *Borana* of Ethiopia, one may also find the *gada* system among the *Guji* Oromo, even if this underwent some periods of decline and hence subject for more modification as compared to the *Borana* of Oromo. Outside the two groups, the *Borana* and *Guji* Oromo, some traces of the *gada* system could only be seen. Combining the historical sources with current ethnographic materials; therefore, help to grasp the overall system of the *gada* system during the 16th century from the present understanding. Cf. Getachew Haile, tarns. and ed., *Abba Bahery's Essay's: Other Documents Concerning the Oromo*(Minnesota: Avon, 2002) [In this compilation of various essays and documents: there is an original 16th century *Ge'ez* manuscript of Abba Bahery; the Amharic translations by Getachew Haile; an English translation by Charles Bekingeham; and other original 19th c sources concerning the Oromo in the appendixes.]; for the Borana *gada* system as a prototype of the Oromo *gada* system during the 16th century, see Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of African Society*(New York: The Free Press, 1973); for the practice of the *gada* system among the *Guji* Oromo, see John Thomas Hinnant, "The Gada System of the Guji of Southern Ethiopia" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1977.); see also Dereje Hinew, "Historical Significance of Some Major *Gadaa* Centers in Oromia" (master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, 2005).

Egyptian monotheism.[2] Lambert Bartels who has made an extensive study into the religion of the Oromo maintains that *waqa* displays a duality in the Oromo believe system, the term referring to both a supreme deity and the sky where it is believed to reside in.[3]

According to the Oromo belief system, the *ayana* and *qallu* function as a bridge between the worshipers and *waqa*. While the *ayana* are divine spirits, the *qallu* are human individuals who, after being possessed by the *ayana*, perform the task of mediation.[4] The *qallu* was similar to a high priest, and served as a spiritual leader for the Oromo community. Some sources, based on some mythical narratives of the Oromo people, attribute even divine origin to the first *qallu*.[5] Mohammed Hassen describes the importance of the *qallu* within the Oromo community in the past in the following way:

> "The *qallu* institution and its relation with *waqa* were the core of traditional religion. Adult men visited the *qallu* for blessing. This brings us to the story of *Abba Muda*. 'The term *muda*, when used by itself is the name of the ceremony that is celebrated once every eight years in honor of the *qallu*.' The *muda* ceremony [pilgrimage] was important because it was the point at which the *qallu* institution and the *gada* system intersected. 'It is one of the critical foci of the Oromo polity."[6]

Two forms of authority seemed to reside within the *qallu* institution during the 16th and subsequent centuries. Being the spiritual leaders of the Oromo polity, they also served as judges when it came to settle conflicts of greater magnitude.[7] They also had a symbolic political authority owing to the custom that the polity's newly elected leaders had to be

[2]Alemayehu Haile et al. ed., *History of the Oromo to the 16th century* (*Finfinne*: *Oromia* Culture and Tourism Bureau; 2006), 26.

[3]Sisay Megersa, *Amhara-Oromo Ethnic Interaction in Salale, Ethiopia from 1941-2000: Ethnic Dynamism, Ethnicity and Construction of Identity in Salale Area, Ethiopia across three régimes* (Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2009), 27.

[4]Hassen, *the Oromo of Ethiopia*, 6.

[5]*Ibid.*

[6]*Ibid*,7.

[7]Though some authors mention only the *muda* ceremony, a ritual conducted by the *gada* in power in honor of the *qallu*, Legesse alerts us also to other ceremony and pertinent activity of the *qallu*. He argues that there is also "…the *lallaba* ceremony in which the *Kallu[qallu]* organizes and oversees the election of the *gada* leaders." Legesse, *Gada*, 44-48.

anointed by the *qallus*.[8] This act constitutes the basic point of intersection between the *qallu* system and the Oromo's socio-political system, which I will discuss below in more detail.

The belief system, along with the *gada* system, defines the overall relationship of the Oromo polity to both the ideal divine world and their immediate physical and social surroundings. Guyo Duyo, for example, conceptualizes such overall relationship as a 'life dialogue'. According to him, life dialogue can be understood in the following way:

> Life dialogue [is] …a philosophical (i.e. epistemological, metaphysical and ethical), historical, and linguistic communication with the conceivable, memorable and predictable aspects of life through their respective, immediate and concrete situations. 'Life dialogue' is not a world view; it is rather a social, and individuals' critical apprehension of their physical, metaphysical and spiritual challenges (encounters) with their environments and mental perception (metaphysical) of the whole universe. These challenges (encounters) and spiritual or mental perceptions are faced and experienced along the perceivable and conceivable horizon of time. Thus, life dialogue consists of both physical and conceptual (metaphysical) interaction of human beings with their physical and spiritual environments and the whole universe as well.[9]

Before delving into the *gada* system, it seems appropriate to have a look into another socio-cultural institution, which demonstrates a level of collective consciousness among the Oromo. The Oromo had two adoption mechanisms through which not only individuals, but also 'alien' communities were adopted by Oromo families and community, respectively.

The first such practice is called *guddifachaa*, whereby Oromo parents, usually those who are without any offspring, adopt a child at an early age. Then, the dogmas of the institution ensure the formation of a strong parent-child bond. Once adopted, the child is considered to be the sole offspring of his adopters for his or her life, and adoptive parents are expected to treat their adopted child as their true child.

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[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Guyo Duyo, "The Quest for Re-Grounding African Philosophy between the Two Camps: The Alternative and the Binary Conception of African Philosophy" (master's thesis, Addis Ababa University, 2011), 93; See also as to how Gemetchu Megersa explains the Oromo world view using the concepts of *ayaana*/spirit/, *uumaa*/the divine and physical world comprising the divine being and the living things/ and *saffu*/the moral category/.Cf. Gemetchu Megersa, "The Oromo World View*," a paper presented at the 1st interdisciplinary seminar of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies*(*Nazareth*/Ethiopia: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1998),41-54.

Even if later they would end up having a biological child of their own, a differential treatment between their adopted and biological children is not allowed by any means. Among the Oromo, the bond between the parent and the adopted child must, therefore, remain intact for life. Deviation from such norm is considered a serious social taboo.[10]

Although *guddifachaa* also plays pivotal role in assuring social cohesion among the Oromo, the institution known as *mogaasaa* is more important to my thesis. This was a large scale adoption mechanism, which was meant to complement the expansive nature of the Oromo society during the 16th and subsequent centuries.

Through the *mogaasaa* mechanism, the Oromo assimilated communities along their line of expansion following the conquest of new territories. While these assimilative instruments usually required the 'assimilated community' to take an oath of allegiance and vow to live in accordance to the Oromo way of life, *Oromumma,* the host community was also under reciprocal obligation of accepting the adopted community as a full-fledged member with complete right.[11]Since *mogaasaa* was contingent on the acceptance of the overall Oromo way of life by the assimilated group, some authors tend to consider this assimilative instrument as synonymous to Oromization.[12]

While Oromization refers to the process, *Oromumma* refers to the Oromo socio-cultural ethos and its political structures. To put it otherwise, *Oromumma* is both the substantive element of the Oromo identity and its over-all 'life-dialogue' with its surrounding. Gemetchu Megersa who is a renowned Oromo anthropologist defines *Oromumma* in the following way:

> *Orommumma*, derived from the name Oromo, refers to all those elements that constitute the Oromo personality. This personality is shaped by all those features of the internal and external environment that bind the Oromo to their land, with its mountains, rivers, its plants and animals, its climates, its seasonal patterns and the other cultures with which it interacts…It is anchored in the Oromo language (*afaan* Oromo, "Oromo mouth") through which the Oromo express their connection to life and land. In short, "Oromoness"[the English

[10]*Gudifacha* is still practiced among the Oromo of Ethiopia. See Mekuria Bulcha, *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation: Dilemmas in the Ethiopian Politics of State-and Nation-Building* (Cape Town: Center for Advanced Study of African Society, 2011), 197.

[11]*Ibid*, 204-206.

[12]*Ibid*.

> equivalent of Oromumma] is composed of the totality of the Oromo culture… One of the most interesting aspects of the Oromo culture can be said to be the way in which the Oromo personality, cultural identity, belief system and world view interact and the extent to which these features are inter-woven to form a unity of meaning. This unity of meaning has remained intact and does not appear to have affected by the diversity and the wide range of socio-cultural settings in which the Oromo culture has unfolded. [13]

During the 16th century, the *gada* system formed the basic substantive and structural aspect of *Oromumma*. Asmarom Legesse, who devoted his Ph.D dissertation to the study of the structural aspects of the *gada* system, describes it as follows:

> The *gada* system is a system of classes (*luba*) that succeed each other every eight years in assuming military, economic, political, and ritual responsibilities. Each *gada* class remains in power during a specific term (*gada*) which begins and ends with a formal power transfer ceremony. Before assuming a position of leadership, the *gada* class is required to wage war against a community that none of their ancestors had raided. This particular war is known as *butta* and is waged on schedule every eight years. It is this event that was most directly connected with the pulsating frontier of their dominions in the 16th century leading toward the conquest of nearly half of Ethiopia's land surface.[14]

Given the complexity of the *gada* institution, the aforementioned definition cited from Leggesse is very helpful to put the system in its simplest definitional framework.[15] Hassen argues that "*gada* cannot be given a univocal interpretation. It stands for several related ideas. It is first of all the concept standing for the whole way of life."[16] Hassen further indicates that *gada* also refers to a specific grade or group of generation in power.

Therefore, *gada* represented an overarching institution that provided political, economic and socio-cultural functions for the Oromo. In such context, it connotes to both the overall 'life-dialogue' of the Oromo and an aspect that transcends a life span of an individual, as it links

[13]Gemetchu Megersa continues to discuss at length the substantive element of the Oromo culture, religion and philosophy and their link to Oromo collective consciousness and identity. Gemetchu Megerssa, "Oromumma: Tradition, Consciousness and Identity," in *Being and Becoming Oromo: Historical and Anthropological Enquires, ed.* Paul W. T. Baxter (Uppsala: Nordiska Africa Institute, 1996), 92-93.

[14]Legesse, *Gada*,8.

[15]To see how the concept *gada* is difficult to define and it is hardly possible to arrive at a single meaning of the term owing to *gada's* multi-dimensional meanings and aspects, cf. Hassen, *the Oromo of Ethiopia*, 9-10.

[16]*Ibid*, 10.

one generation with the other. In contrast, it has a rather limited application when referring to the generational group or the grade (*luba)* in power.

Owing to those various layers of understanding that surround the notion of a *gada*, the system appears simple from surface. When one gets deeper in his/her analysis, however, the complexity of the system begins to unfold.[17] Illustrative of this point is Legresse's description of the system:

> The *Gada* System is an institution that represents an extreme development of a type of social structure known to anthropologists as age-sets. Extreme forms are often very instructive in the social sciences because they expose in an exaggerated way simple facts about human society that we take totally for granted and that, consequently, we do not comprehend. The *Gada* system is an institution that appears so exaggerated that it is readily dismissed by laymen and scholars alike as a sociological anomaly. Anomalous though it may be, it is one of the most astonishing and instructive turns the evolution of human society has taken.[18]

Although it is not a concern of this project, one important question could be raised here: Can the *gada* system be considered as a unique feature of Oromo? The literature at our disposal shows that other Cushitic speaking societies in East Africa have analogous age-sets structures. Among age-sets structures, however, there is a great deal of internal variation. While some of these systems use age as the only institutional framework, others use generational grading as their basic structural mechanism.

According to Legesse, the Oromo use both systems to address the structural limitations inherent within the generational grade. This is not to say that age-based systems are better than those systems based on generations. Both sub-systems have their own strength and weakness. Given that the Oromo use the generational grading as the main institutional framework, the age-system plays only a complementary role.[19]

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[17]Legesse, *Gada*, 121-134.

[18]*Ibid*, 50.

[19]*Ibid*, 50-52; See also, A. H. J. Prins, *East African Age-Class Systems: An Inquiry into the Social Order of Galla, Kipsigis and Kikuyu* (Groningen: J. B. Wolters and Djakarta, 1953), 9-27.

The following two quotes demonstrate the complexity of the generational type while providing at the same time an insight as to why the Oromo are probably using both systems. According to C. R. Hallpike:

> Generation-grading systems are…cumbersome and difficult to operate, requiring a sophisticated calendar and a number of irksome restraints of a sexual or marital nature, and are clearly less effective than true age-grading systems in stratifying society into such basic categories as boys, warriors, and elders.[20]

Legesse sees the complexity of the *gada* system in the following way:

> Among the [Oromo] of Ethiopia the institution has reached a most remarkable level of complexity. There are few institutions in the world that afford us as rich a sociological context for the study of the relationship between time and human society as does the case of the Borana [Oromo]. Here we find a society that is stratified into two distinct but cross-cutting systems of peer-group structures. One is a system in which the members of each class are recruited strictly on the basis of chronological age. The other is a system in which the members are recruited equally strictly on the basis of genealogical generations. The first has nothing to do with genealogical ties. The second has little to do with age. Both types of social groups are formed every eight years. Both sets of groups pass from one stage of development to the next every eight years. All Borana males have a position in both systems.[21]

A. H. J. Prins produced a PhD dissertation analyzing East African age-sets systems by using anthropological comparative approach. One of the issues, which captured his attention, was to indentify the particular group that has made the innovation before the system was diffused among those other Cushitic groups that are currently still practicing the system. Although such studies would enable us to have a total picture about the *gada* system in particular and age-sets systems in general, it is not an easy task to find out who made the first initiative before the system became widespread among Cushitic speakers of East Africa. Unfortunately, we have very scarce written accounts concerning the practice before the 20th century.

[20]C.R. Hallpike, review of the Origin of the Borana GADA System: A discussion of GADA;Three Approaches to the Study of African Society, by Asmarom Legesse, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 46. no.1 (1976), 48.

[21]Legesse, *Gada*,50-51.

As regards those Cushitic groups that are found outside Ethiopia, Prins confirms that the late 19th century is the only period to which one can go retrospectively in order to address the issue. It is indicated that there is an account about Mwangi/Maina/ peoples of today's Kenya for practicing the age-set system in 1898.[22] And with regards to those non-Oromo Cushitic peoples that reside in Ethiopia, we have no historical record apart from some recent ethnographic documents. To address this problem, some scholars used computer simulations in order to establish the earliest time when the age-sets systems could have become first operational. C. R. Hallpike nevertheless believes that the computer simulations applied to the case of the Oromo by Legesse is flawed in some respect and therefore the model seems less helpful in this case.[23]

We have some firsthand historical written sources that documented the practice of the *gada* system among the Oromo as far back as the 16th century. Concerning what happened before this century, we are kept in dark and can hardly answer some key questions, such as, how and when did the Oromo begin to use these systems? Who made the first innovations in age-sets systems?

Although these questions remain very crucial, they are not the concern of the current project, for it is neither interested in the study of ethno-genesis of any of these groups nor in any kind of comparison. On the basis of our main historical source that was written during the 16th century, we can only be sure that the *gada* system was already operational among the Oromo at that time.

The French missionary Martial de Salviac left his account in 1901 in the following way: "considering the antiquity of their custom, the stability of their form of government, M. Antoine d' Abbadie calls the Oromo 'African conservatives.' They are that also from another point of view. Their land is the one from all of Ethiopia which best preserves the gracefulness of nature."[24]

[22]Prins, *East African Age-Class Systems*, 47.

[23]Hallpike studied the practice of age-system among the Konso people of Ethiopia who are neighbor to the Borana of Oromo. To compare his critical points of discussion in relation to Legesse's simulation, see Legesse, *Gada*, 135-161.

[24]The original book of Martial de Salviac was written in French in 1901 and d'Abbadie was 19th c French explorer who also who wrote an account about the *gada* system. Martial de Salviac, *The Oromo: An Ancient People: Great African Nation,* trans. Ayalew Kanno (*Finfinnee: Oromia* Culture and Tourism Bureau, 2005), 20.

Gada: The Stage of Political Leadership

Despite contemporary discourses on models of democracy, the *gada* system could be considered as an 'egalitarian' political institution. The male members of the Oromo polity were classified into generation-sets and *gada* grades. The generation-sets were a group of individuals who were relatively in the same age range and shared the same status.

The grades on the other hand corresponded to a stage of development along the hierarchically and functionally differentiated age plane. Those belonging to a given set of generation were supposed to pass through all the grades together, sharing more or less the same responsibilities.[25]

During the 16th century the Oromo had, as *Abba* Bahery recorded, "neither kings nor masters like other peoples; rather they obey a *luba* for eight years. And after eight years another *luba* is appointed, and the first is relieved."[26] *Luba* refers to the grade that rules the polity for eight years. Based on the work of others, such as *Abba* Bahery, d'Abbadie and de Salviac, G.W.B. Hutingford's sums up the working of the *gada* system in the following way:

> The *Gada* System: The Males of every [Oromo] tribe…are comprised within 10 groups called *gada* which are linked in pairs and run in two hemi-cycles of five *gada* each; to the *gada* of the second hemi-cycle belong the sons of members of the first hemi-cycle…During the first 40 years of life all males pass through a series of five eight-years periods of initiation, also called *gada*, to each of which they belong in turn for eight years only. The paired *gada* may be distinguished as *gada* sets, and the eight year initiation periods as *gada*-grades. Any attempt to elucidate the system must be based on the fact that these figures, 5x8= 40…[27]

According to the functional hierarchy of age-generations, the level of importance and degree of public responsibility of each grade increased gradually until it reached the top leadership position (acquired by those aged 40 to 48), after which the public responsibility of the grade

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[25]*Legesse, Gada,* 50-117.

[26]Taken from the English version of Abba Bahery's original Gee'ez manuscript. Cf. Abba Bahiry, "Ethnography of the Galla," in *Proceedings of the British Academy: Lectures and Memories* 105, trans. Charles Bekingeham (*1999). Accessed from* from Getachew Haile, *collected essay about Abba Bahery*, Appendix II, 196-213.

[27]G.W.Huntingford, "The Galla of Ethiopia: The Kingdom of Kafa and Janjero," in Ethnographic Surveys of Africa: Part II, ed. Daryll Forde (London: International African Institute, 1955), 41.

decreased. Following retirement, the group's main function became to serve as advisors to the ruling *gada*/*luba* and other lower levels of public and non-public preoccupations.[28] The following tables are very helpful to give us insight as to how the generation-sets are organized and operate along the hemi-cycle notion of the *gada* system.

No	*Gada* Grade	Number of years in the *Gada* System	Number of years (Expected age of individuals)
I	Iti Mako	0-8	8-16
II	Daballe	8-16	16-24
III	Folle	18-24	24-32
IV	Qondala	24-32	32-40
V	Luba	32-40	40-48

Figure 5: Table[29] demonstrating the distribution of generation grades and age sets along the *gada* system.

As one can see from the above table, those in the first grade were supposed to take care of some simple responsibilities in correspondence to their early age. Typically, they mainly took care of calves and did some errands close to home. Those in the second age grade were given the responsibility to manage the economic base of the community, that is, the handling of the livestock. The third grade was a warrior age grade and was usually not allowed to live among the community. This grade was thus supposed to live isolated from the core of the community and its members were at this stage not allowed to have their own family.

When they became fully adults between the age of 32 and 40 approximately, they would be allowed to marry and form their own family. This stage was thus a period of transition, with the members of this grade functioning as a reserve army stationing within the community while also learning the arts of administration and law. Finally, when they were believed to be fully matured between the ages of 40 and 48, they would be handed the power of leading the

[28] *Legesse, Gada*, 50-117.

[29] Source < http://gabuo.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46&Itemid=89&limit=1&limitstart=1>

Oromo polity. After the leading *luba* grade, everyone would descend into *yuba*, a grade allotted to those who retired from power.[30]

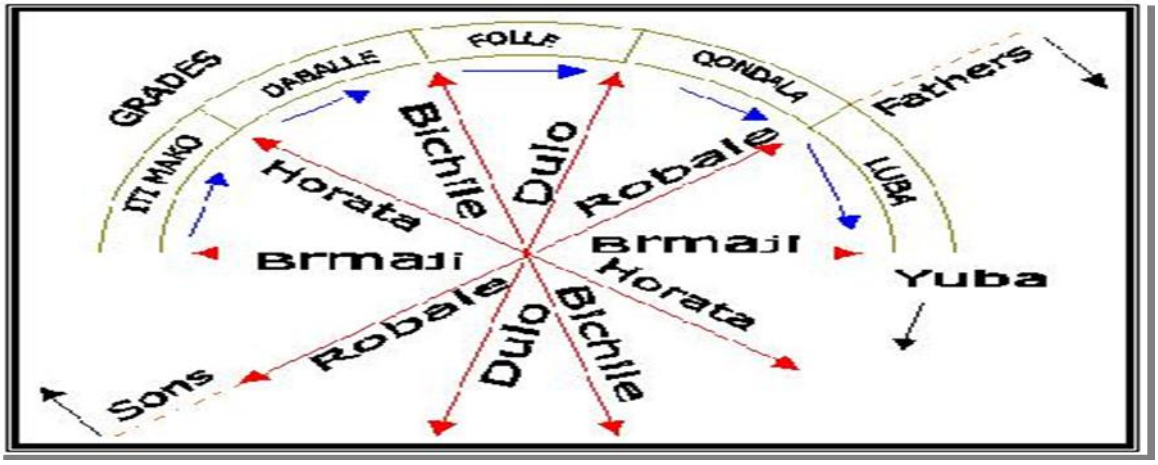

Figure 6: The hemi-cyclic notion of the *gada* system that demonstrates the reciprocal movement of a father and his son[31].

Seen from today's perspective, one could possibly argue on the basis of the above reciprocal movement of the father and his son in the *gada* system, that the *gada* system structurally discouraged the formation of dynastic rule in the period. It is hardly possible to say for granted whether there was a clear intent to discourage dynastic rule in the mind of those agents during the 16th century or before who designed the whole system in such a way. The only thing that one can say safely is the fact that the *gada* system discouraged fathers and their sons from being active members in the system at the same time. This is so because a child entered into the first grade only when his father has retired from the ruling grade, the *luba*.[32]

One of the striking aspects of the *gada* system was the way it differentiated roles and responsibilities among various components of the ruling grade. All individuals who passed

[30]*Legesse, Gada*,50-117.

[31]Source: <http://oromocanadian.org/Gada%20system.htm>

[32]Since no one was allowed to get married before reaching the stage of *qondala* , that is, when they were aged approximately between 32 and 40, most children would be technically ready for the first class only at the same time when their fathers were close to retirement or have already retired from the system. Yet, the validity of such reasoning remains sound only if the system is considered in its ideal form. In the course of their expansion in subsequent centuries, owing to historical trajectories, the Oromo might have been forced to make some level of modifications.

through the same initiations would form their own assembly following their initiation into the *luba* grade. Thus those who were initiated into the *luba* grade act as the general assembly for the period of eight years. The assembly is called *caffee* in *afaan* Oromo.

The *caffee* acted as a law making branch of the *gada* system. According to Asmé-Giorgis, 19th century Ethiopian chronicler, the main task of *luba* assembly was "to administer justice, to hear the historical and juridical report of the expiring eight years, to criticize some of the existing laws, legislate new ones, and proclaim the future law and procedures."[33]

In addition, the *caffee* had to elect from among its members the leader of the whole polity for the period of eight years. The elected leader is referred to variously as *Abba Boku*(father of the scepter) and *Abba Biyya*(father of the country). In addition, based on merit, other main roles and responsibilities were also filled by the *caffee*.

The main ones were: *Abba Dula* (father of the army); *Abba Hayu*(father of knowledge/ knowledge in terms of history or collective memory of the Oromo polity); *Abba Sera*(father of law- law repository in past-present continuum); and *Abba Sa'a*(father of livestock).[34] Like the term *gada*, the names of each post represent a complex context beyond their respective literary English translations. Here is a diagram which could illustrate the structure of authority within *gada* 'government'. Yet, it must be noted that the diagram is a rough attempt to simplify the division of roles and responsibilities within the governing *gada* grade.

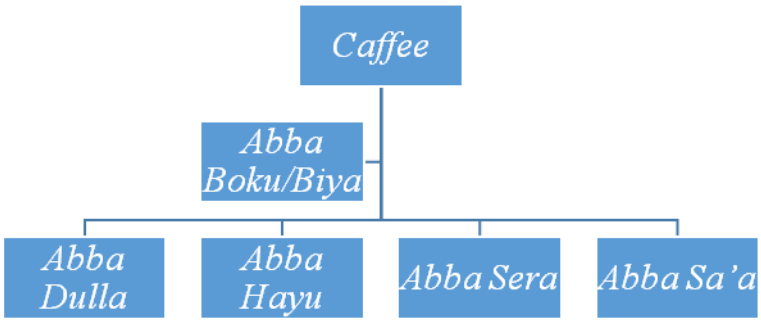

Figure 7:- A diagram illustrating division of power, responsibilities, and roles within the rank of the ruling *gada* grade, *luba*.

[33]As quoted by Bulcha, *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation*, 209.

[34]*Ibid*, 208-211.

Since the present subsection attempts to provide a brief description of the Oromo polity during the 16th century, only some aspects of the Oromo Polity that are believed to be of some importance for our thesis have been selected and highlighted. Before concluding our overview, therefore, it is important to further highlight some cultural aspects of the Oromo polity.

Figure 8: The picture[35] of the statue of Abba *Boku/Biyya* with his Scepter, the sign of authority. The statue also includes the large sycamore tree, *odda*, under whose shade *gada* assemblies have taken place for centuries. The statute is found in Adama/Nazareth, the seat of *Cafee* Oromia which is the parliament of the present day Oromia Regional State.

Although Oromo women were not active participants in the political routine of the *gada* system, as mothers, however, they engaged in various rituals. Among these rituals, were rites of passages in which parents provided active support for their male children in passing from one generation to the other. Even if there were also other public occasions through which Oromo women could contribute to the effectiveness of the *gada* system, the area in which Oromo's women contribution had been paramount was their role as "time keepers," to use the apt expression by Bulcha.

The women who have been experts in time keeping were called *ayyaantuu*. According to Bulcha, "there is some literature on the complex methods used by the *ayyaantuu*, time-

[35]Sources: < http://www.google.com.et/imgres?q=Adama+Oromo/photos>

reckoning experts, to determine the position of the celestial bodies and compute the *calander* year. The calendar is based on astronomical observations of the moon in conjunction with seven or eight particular stars or star groups…known as *urgi dhaha*-guiding stars."[36]

There is another cultural feature that also has to be highlighted in the current subsection. It is called *irreecha*. It is an annual feast meant for expressing gratitude towards *waqa*. It has been celebrated every year, days before the New Year, according to Oromo Calendar.[37] The *irreecha* has played a paramount cohesive role each year in bringing everyone together regardless of age and sex for the same goal. The goal has been to be grateful towards *waqa*. Thus through the *muda* ceremonies/pilgrimage in honor of the *qallu*/and *irreecha,* collective concerns of Oromo polity had been raised and were given blessings.

In nutshell, one may conclude that the features of Oromo polity during the 16th century can help us to understand Oromo's collective identity. The *gada* system, through its various socio-cultural and political channels, had brought the whole Oromo polity in a kind of cohesive network in which everyone was bound to each other through reciprocally oriented roles, responsibilities and rights.

The *muda* ceremony, various rituals including those rites of passages during transitions from one *gada* grade to the other, and *irreecha* had been major cultural features that further strengthen the cohesiveness of the Oromo polity. On the basis of the insights that are generated from the *enemas* assimilation process of the 'alien' through *mogaasaa*, it can be argued that the Oromo were conscious of their collective Oromo identity *vis-à-vis* the 'other'.

3.2. How can we characterize the collective existence of Oromo polity during the 16th century using concepts such as tribe, ethnie, or nation?

In contrast to the previous subsection of the present chapter, which has been highly descriptive of the ethnographic and historical particularities of the Oromo society, the current subsection will be rather highly interpretive in its mode of exposition. In so doing, we will

[36]Bulcha, *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation,* 210-211; for a more detailed description concerning the configurations of months and days in the Oromo calendar before 19th century, see Hutingford, 29.

[37]Bulcha, *Contours of the Emergent and Ancient Oromo Nation,* 211; for more detailed description of *irreecha* particularly for present-day practice, see Meskerem Assegued, "Erecha," *a paper presented at the 1st interdisciplinary seminar of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies*(*Nazareth*-Ethiopia: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, 1998),83-109.

focus on some issues related to agency and structural aspects of the Oromo polity in order to understand the same polity as a collective entity.

When we seek to understand the Oromo as a collective entity, concepts such as *tribe*, *ethnie* and nation will be used as analytical tools so that the discussion in this particular subsection will be in harmony with the spirit of the whole thesis. How can one understand a *tribe*? *Tribe* and its derivatives, the adjective *tribal* and the noun *tribalism*, had greater importance and appeal among some works, published mainly before the 1960s, that dealt with African socio-cultural and political organization.

In those days, *tribe* had wider appeal among social anthropologists and other alike scholars when it came to describe some social features of African societies. Today, anthropology as a discipline has already distanced itself from the usage of the term *tribe* for methodological reasons. Why does anthropology make such a methodological shift in the usage of the term *tribe*? This will be the basic issue that will be given greater attention in this subsection. Before addressing this crucial point, however, it seems wise to discuss as to why our thesis placed the issue of *tribe* into the focus of the present discussion.

Tribe and its derivatives have been used in different contexts and to different degree in relation to nation and nationalism. For example, some of the sources at our disposal that made a great deal of contribution to the historiography of Oromo have relied on the concept of *tribe* to describe the Oromo.[38] Owing to the fact that the present thesis attempts to understand the Oromo using the concept of a nation, it is indispensable to address whether the Oromo had been/are *tribal* societies or not.

As it will be discussed later, considering the Oromo as a *tribe* could pose a methodological problem to our endeavor of understanding the Oromo from the point view of a nation or *vice versa*. It follows then that the thesis must settle the issue at hand before attempting to validate

[38]As for instance, Eric Haberland is one of the few Africanist scholars whose work make a breakthrough in the historiography of the Oromo, in particular concerning the debate surrounding 'Oromo's country of Origin'. Although Professor Haberalnd used the term *tribe* in a very loose form to describe the Oromo and other societies in South Ethiopia, one may still reveal some covert qualitative distinctions in comparison to the Christian half of Northern Ethiopia. For the case with the Oromo, cf. Eric Haberland, "The Galla of Southern Ethiopia," *Summarized English Translation of his Book, Galla Sud-Athiopiens*,(Mimeographed IES Archives, A/68, 1970), 1-17. For his usage of tribe in relation to Societies in Southern Ethiopia, see Haberland, "The Influence of the Christian Ethiopian Empire in Southern Ethiopia," *2nd International Conference of Ethiopian Studies at Manchester* (Institute of Ethiopia Studies, 1964), 135-38.

its methodological position that aspires to understand the concept of nation and the Oromo polity by using reciprocal movements.

In what seems to be a response to the dominant discourse on Africa during the 1960s that—impressed the formation of 'new nation states' in the continent—professed a new era for Africa, Colin M. Turnbull argues that "in the midst of a series of papers dealing with the movement of Africa in world affairs today and with the nature of the role the new African nations are to play…before the new nations can be properly understood we have to understand *tribalism*."[39] He further insists that *tribalism* " is neither a popular nor fashionable idea, but the desire to divorce *tribalism* from the modern, contemporary Africa with which we have to deal is both unrealistic and misconceived."[40]

As one may infer from some of the information provided in the footnotes, the works cited in relation to our discussion of *tribe* were published between 1960 and 1970. As we will see later, the usage of the concepts of *tribe* and *tribalism* were widespread before and during 1960s. It would be a mere judgmental endeavor to point a finger at the scholars of these generations simply because the term they used is, from today's perspective, a culturally loaded derogatory concept. It would rather make sense if we try to understand the prevailing context in the period in order to grasp how and why these scholars came to use these concepts.

[39]See Colin M. Turnbull, "Tribalism and Social Evolution in Africa," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (1964) Since the following paper was published two years before Turbull's paper, it helps to get the context of his argument. The following paper is not only antecedent to Turnbull's paper, but is also written from the opposite perspective. In contrast to Turnbull's argument, see the negative side of *tribalism* in William R. Bascom, "Tribalism, Nationalism, and Pan-Africanism," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (January, 1962),22-32

[40]According to Turnbull, the misconception regarding *tribalism* in Africa was as the result of two reasons: One, *tribalism* was misunderstood as antithesis to the role the new nation states had to play in the period, that is, in the 1960s; two, *tribalism* was misunderstood as backward phenomenon, the opposite of modernism. On the basis of these two positions, therefore, Turnbull goes on to suggest that: "Without wishing for a moment to suggest that tribalism can or should be perpetuated, I propose that tribal systems should be carefully re-examined and tribal values reconsidered. For him, "such examination will lead us to a greater understanding of what the new nations are, and why, but also … there are in tribal systems many values, institutional and personal, that could play a significant role in the developing of new political and social systems…" From such perspectives, "Tribal Africa never has been static;" Turnbull argues, "on the contrary, it has been vital and dynamic, resilient to a remarkable degree." According to him, "It is unthinkable that such a deep-routed system could have completely disappeared in so few years, however much the outer form has changed." See Turnbull, 23-24

Although the concepts have always implied, either implicitly or explicitly, a kind of qualitative distinction in terms of modern versus primitive, the authors during the decade might have intended them as a neutral form of social classification, like family and society, seeing it from a common sense perspective. Furthermore, as Eriksen remarks, terms like ethnic group and ethnicity attracted the attention of social anthropologists only after the 1960s, though the term ethnic has been in use since antiquity.[41] Thus, *tribe* and *tribalism* might have been understood in the period in part in the same context as what is conveyed by the meanings of ethnic entity and ethnicity today.[42]

In similar vein, Thomas Hylland Eriksen talks about "a shift in Anglophone social anthropological terminology concerning the nature of the social units we study. While one formerly spoke of 'tribes,' the term 'ethnic group' is nowadays much more common."[43] He also argues that the change was not merely the replacement of one term by the other. Rather, the change reflects a shift in substance from an understanding of *tribe* as a static and isolated social unit to a more dynamic social unit based on intra/inter-ethnic interaction.

According to Eriksen, a change from a *tribe* to an ethnic group "may also mitigate or even transcend an ethnocentric or Eurocentric bias which anthropologists have often been accused of promoting covertly."[44] Eriksen argues that "when we talk of *tribes*, we implicitly introduce a sharp, qualitative distinction between ourselves and the people we study; the distinction generally corresponds to the distinction between modern and traditional or so-called primitive societies."[45]

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[41]Here it must be noted that though the term ethnic has been in use since antiquity, its meaning has shown greater dynamics across time. See Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives, 3rd ed. (New York: Pluto Press, 2010)*, 4.

[42]Erik Haberland, for instance, avoids using *tribe* in his later publication. Where he needs to conceptualize a social unit, he has used ethnic groups in place of *tribes.* Cf. Haberland, "Ethnogensis and Expansion in Southwest Ethiopia with Special reference to the *Omotic*-Speaking Peoples," in *Abbay: Documents pour Servir a l'Histoire de la Civilisation Ethiopienne*, ed. Jean Chavaillon, no.9, (France: Center National de la Recherche Scientifique ;C.N.R.S, 1978), 141-143.

[43]Eriksen, *Ethnicty and Nationalism*, 9; see also Richard Jenkins, "From Tribes to Ethnic Groups," *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Exploration*, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles, 2008), 17-18; 19-28

[44]Eriksen, *Ethnicty and Nationalism*,9-10; See also Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*, 17-18.

[45]*Ibid*.

As far as the current chapter is considered, we are interested in the issue primarily concerning the context in which *tribe* may implicate a sharp, qualitative distinction between the 'self' and the 'other.' Thus let us devote some more passages for this issue and elaborate the point that we seek to establish in relation to the word *tribe*. Why did *tribe* and *tribalism* get currency in anthropological discourses in the past? To put it otherwise, why did anthropologists exploit *tribe* and *tribalism* to describe socio-cultural and political organizations in Africa and elsewhere before the 1960s?

Among other things, it seems plausible that anthropology had been highly influenced by its 'fore-tradition' and its respective 'particular present' when adopting a sharp qualitative distinction between itself and its 'objects,' the 'uncivilized and primitive' societies in Africa and elsewhere.[46] So why did anthropology conceptualize its "object" as a *tribe*?

This directly takes us to the issue of 'alterity' which is "the concept and treatment of the alien objectified other."[47] According to Rapport and Overing, the concept of 'alterity' has been gaining ground in the vocabularies of anthropology since the 1990s only because anthropology during this period underwent a process of reflexive engagement with its otherwise shaky epistemological foundation.[48]

Before anthropology engaged itself critically with the process of self-reflection, *tribe* as a concept played a significant role in the larger dichotomy of civilized or modern Europe/West *vis-à-vis* the primitive "others" in Africa and elsewhere. "By definition anthropology's primary object for study has been the Western imperialized other," Rapport and Overing argue, "(while sociology has had the task of objectifying the West's own internal subaltern classes)."[49] This was so, claim Rapport and Overing, because "anthropology had its birth as an academic discipline in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, during what we might label the height of modernist thought—and at the apex of Western imperialist endeavors."[50]

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[46]Nigel Rapport and Joanna Overing, *Social Cultural Anthropology: The Key Concepts* (London: Rutledge, 2000), 10-14.

[47]*Ibid*, 9.

[48]*Ibid*.

[49]*Ibid*, 9-10.

[50]*Ibid*, 10-11.

According to them, anthropology was thus seriously under the influence of its immediate intellectual and political-economic milieu. Anthropology using its 'realistic rhetoric,' which was the influence both from its modernist epistemological ground and the prevailing colonial state's discourses, reduced societies in Africa and elsewhere as its objects to be "naturalized and thereby belong to one of those worlds transcended by modern civilization to be marked as an uncivilized of nature…To objectify is to naturalize, and therefore to create distance between self and the object, whether it to be animate or inanimate, human or stone."[51]

Rapport and Overing argue that two strategies had been very instrumental in the process of objectifying the uncivilized and primitive other. According to them, "western creations of difference and images of otherness are products of a process of exclusion. The exclusivist ideology, which assumes the superiority of self-*vis-à-vis* all others, is a very good strategy through which to disempower others."[52]

And through the principle of inversion, socio-cultural variations and other aspects of difference "…between self and other was understood to be absolute."[53] As a result, the primitive other with its *tribal* socio-cultural organizations, its *tribal* chiefs, and its *tribal* customary laws were thus taken as an absolute inversion of modern Europe with its modern nation-states, rational society, written law and so on and so forth.[54]

If the importance of culturally loaded words like *tribes* have expired and the words are not in use any more even within contemporary anthropological discourses, then it seems plausible at this level that it is not methodologically appropriate or safe any longer to describe the Oromo mode of existence in the past as being *tribal* in kind. But this does not mean that *tribe* and *tribalism* have already ceased to be used in today's scholarly publications. Even though we

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[51]*Ibid*, 11-12.

[52]*Ibid*, 12-14.

[53]*Ibid.*

[54]By using the following points from Rapport and Joanna Overing, the above argument can be justified in the following way: "Such '*inferiorization'* of excluded others became a constant throughout the development of European thought. It developed by the 19th century into unifying discourse upon alterity that was structured further by the increasingly popular language of evolutionism. With its stress upon the progressive move of humankind from the primitive to the civilized, such imagery had clear and powerful implications for the colonial enterprise. Cf. *ibid*, 14.

have a handful of literature at our disposal, still one can see the persistence and appeal of these concepts in some recently published works.[55]

If it is not methodologically tenable to consider Oromo society in terms of a *tribe* or *tribalism*, could we use the concepts of *ethnie* or nation instead? Since the concept of a nation has been the focus of the previous chapter and will be so in the following one as well, we will refrain from getting too deep into discussing the issue of a nation in the current chapter.

Some definitions concerning nation will suffice to highlight whether we can understand the Oromo as a nation or not as a detailed discussion along this point will be made in the subsequent chapter. In contrast, we must carry out here a brief theoretical overview on the concepts of ethnic entity and ethnicity in order to maintain for our thesis a frame of understanding that will be helpful while we seek to understand the Oromo polity in relation to such conceptual apparatus.

Just like nation and nationalism, concepts such as ethnic entities and ethnicity are equally ambiguous and controversial.[56] According to Ronald Cohen, these concepts have such vague

[55]Unfortunately, very recent publications in relation to nation, ethnic federalism and in the field of education have made use of tribalism in one way or another, although we are not sure whether these authors have a clear idea about the ideological implications of the terms or not. A recent book focusing on 'Nation' has used *tribe* as one level of social development that leads to another levels of developments, ethnic entities and then to statehood. According to this work, "Tribal societies were mostly pre- or protohistoric, that is, they lacked writing systems. Good evidence about them comes only from historic state societies, pre-modern or modern, that left records of their tribal neighbors."Cf. Azar Gat, *Nations: The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44-66. Using such definitional framework, the Oromo during the 16th century had been *tribal* societies only because they lacked a written culture. As it has been mentioned elsewhere before, the present thesis does not accept such rationalization for using a *tribe* either as a social unit or as a marker of a stage of social development. In the field of education, a work published in 2012 has used tribalism as one polarity in a given continuum that also comprises globalization on the other end of the same continuum. In their extreme context, both *tribalism* and globalization are seen as dangerous. Thus, an equilibrium between these two forces has to be maintained that can only be feasible when the two forces co-exist together. Cf. Sameena Karim, "The Co-existence of Globalism and Tribalism: A Review of Literature," *Journal of Research in International Education11, no.2* (2012), 137-151. A recent publication on Ethiopian ethnic federalism has also used *tribalism* to devalue the present statuesque of Ethiopian state that is an umbrella of ethnic based federations. Had it not been for scope and other constraints, it would have been interesting to discuss whether such pretentions are valid or not. It suffices here to raise our doubt whether there was a comprehensive and all inclusive 'collective Ethiopian identity' across time or not. It would have been interesting also to debate as to how any attempt to understand and thus represent various social groups in Ethiopia in terms of an ethnic entity or a nation would end up as mere enterprise of *tribalism*. Also, in light of self-determination, it does not seem to me valid to reduce national self-determination in its totality as a mere a *tribal* enterprise. To have a better grasp as to how the work under discussion has used *tribalism* and to see from which angle I have been arguing, see Assefa Mehretu, "Ethnic Federalism and its Potential to dismember the Ethiopian State," *Progress in Development Studies*12, no. 2 & 3 (2012), 113-133.

[56]It is a paradox, however, that the debate concerning ethnicity also assumes additional dimensions when it comes to its application to the African situation. There are a number of works that consider ethnicity as a legacy of colonialism. If nation, nationalism, and ethnicity are all but mere legacies of European colonialism, then how can we understand group dynamism and collective identities during pre-colonial Africa? Such generalist arguments always

meanings because they "involve a variety of forms, scope, intensity; and having psychic, historical, social, economic and political variables."[57] Although the terms ethnic entity and ethnicity are sometimes seen as being synonymous and hence used interchangeably, the current thesis considers them nevertheless as separate but interrelated concepts.

Thus we may consider nationalism as some kind of sentimental feeling be it instrumental or otherwise; we may then see a nation as a social unit that nationalist's want to use as a source of legitimacy or what they want to build if the nation does not exist yet. Following this example, we may draw a parallel between such terms as ethnic entities or nation on one hand, and ethnicity or nationalism, on the other. As nation and nationalism are two different but interrelated phenomena, so are *ethnies* and ethnicity. As the degree and nature of dependence of nationalism on nation or otherwise is a point of argument among scholars in the field, neither is the context of ethnicity's dependence on *ethnie* a matter of consensus.[58]

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fall into a methodological trap as far Ethiopia is considered. If indeed, such phenomena were indeed colonial legacies, does this mean that neither ethnicity and nor nationalism has ever been part of socio-cultural and political realities in Ethiopia across time and space? I remember reading a paper entitled, "Is Ethnicity a Colonial Legacy in Africa?" when I was doing my MA at Addis Ababa University. The paper has inverted the interrogative format of its title into a statement and concluded that ethnicity is indeed a colonial legacy in Africa. Unfortunately, I cannot get an access to this paper this time so that I cannot cite it here. Yet, the following paper, in which the author attempts to show ethnicity as a process of historical construction ranging from the pre-colonial times to the post-colonial Africa, hopefully highlights the nature of the debate in Africa. The paper uses patron-client relations across time in Africa as its empirical resource to justify its position *vis-à-vis* those discourses that depict ethnicity as a mere 'colonial construction' as far as Africa is considered. See Bruce J. Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism," *African Affairs* 97(1998), 305-341.

[57]As quoted in Sisay Megersa, *Amhara-Oromo Ethnic Interaction*, 12.

[58]As for instance, one may find some works which consider such contingency of ethnicity upon the presence of ethnic entities as a mere ethnic group's reifications. It can be argued that Brubaker's 'group reification' argument seems very potent against the primordial conception of ethnicity that downplays individual's interest and decision/agency. Cf. Rogers Brubaker, ed., "Ethnicity without Groups," *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 7-27. As for instance, Clifford Geertz, who is one among prominent primordial thinkers, argues that "One is bound to one's kinsman, one's neighbor, one's fellow believer, ipso facto; as the result not merely of personal affection, practical necessity, common interest, or incurred obligation, but at least in great part *by virtue of some unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself* [emphasis mine]." Yet, Geertz himself also acknowledges some level of individual agency and flux when he insists that "the general strength of such primordial bonds, and the types of them that are important, differ from person to person, from society to society, and from time to time." Cf. Clifford Geertz, "Primordial Ties," in *Ethnicity: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 42; 40-45. On the contrary, as to how individual agency is magnified *vis-à-vis* primordial conceptions, see Michael Hechter, "Ethnicity and Rational Choice Theory," in *Ethnicity: Oxford Readers*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 90-98. Compare also, Sisay Megersa, *Amhara-Oromo Ethnic Interaction,11*-16. A third alternative, providing a situational perspective but not necessarily an instrumental/functional one (like in the case of some of the previous authors, such as Michael Hechter), can be found in Eghosa E. Osaghae, "A Re-examination of the Conception of Ethnicity in Africa as an Ideology of Inter-elite competition," *African Study Monographs* 12, no. 1(1991),43-61. According to this work, there are situations in which ethnicity is used as an elite maneuver; but there are also times when ethnicity manifest itself in the absence of the elites at the level the masses. Yet, whether ethnicity is exploited by

It seems apparent that the root words, ethnic and ethnicity, have originated from a Greek word, *ethnos*, which seems to connote "…a range of situations in which a collectivity of humans lived and acted together…and which is typically translated today as 'people' or 'nation'."[59] While the term *ethno* merely denotes a sense of people for Y.V. Bromley, Walker Connor claims that *ethno* is "the Greek word for nation in the latter's pristine sense of a group characterized by common descent."[60]John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith claim that "the term 'ethnicity' is quite clearly, a derivative of the much older term and more commonly used adjective 'ethnic'…The English adjective 'ethnic' in turn derives from the ancient Greek term *ethnos*; it was used as a synonym of gentile, that is non-Christian and non-Jewish *pagan*…"[61]

Due to the fact, as Hutchison and Smith further note, "that the English language has no equivalent proper noun for the Greek ethnos—unlike French, which retains the noun *ethnie*," the difficulty of the concepts of ethnicity and ethnic entities also extended to the etymology of these two terms to some extent.[62] After showing the problematic nature of the etymology of the terms of *ethnie*, ethnic and ethnicity, Hutchison and Smith suggest to use only the French term *ethnie* to denote 'ethnic communities' or 'ethnic groups.'[63] We also follow the example of Hutchison and Smith and we stick to *ethnie* whenever we want to mention either an 'ethnic entity' or 'ethnic groups' for the sake of simplicity and economy of words.

Leaving aside the debates and controversies concerning *ethnie* in the field of ethnicity lets us depart from Fredrick Barth's understanding of an *ethnie*. For him, "…ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves, and thus have the

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the elites taking some political-economic considerations, or take place at cultural level of the masses, ethnicity altogether is considered as contingent on the existence of ethnic groups.

[59]Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*,10.

[60]For *ethnos* as synonymous to people, see Y.V. Bromley, " The terms 'Ethnos' and Its Definition," in *Race and Peoples: Contemporary Ethnic and Racial Problems*, ed. I.R. Grigulevrch and S.Y. Kozolov (Moscow: Progress,1977),18-19. In relation to the reference to nation, see Walker Connor, "A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is …" in *Nationalism: Oxford Reader*, ed. John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 43.

[61]Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, eds., "Introduction," *Ethnicity: Oxford Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 4.

[62]See Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, eds., "Concept of Ethnicity: Introduction," *Ethnicity: Oxford Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15.

[63]Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, eds., "Introduction,"4.

characteristics of organizing interaction between people."[64] Barth himself departs from an ideal type that seems to reconcile the objectivists and subjectivists of understanding of an *ethnie*.[65] In conformity with objectivists, Barth's ideal type defines an *ethnie* as a "biologically self-perpetuating" group that "shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms." An *ethnie* is also considered as "a field of communication and interaction."[66]

On the other hand, Barth's ideal type also gives an emphasis to the subjective aspect of an *ethnie*, that is, "the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others."[67]Barth argues that the characteristic of ascription is an important feature of an *ethnie*. Barth insists that defining an *ethnie* as an ascriptive and exclusive group helps to understand the nature of continuity within such social units. Although the social and cultural content of any *ethnie* tend to be malleable due to historical dynamics, the persistence of collective identity through the maintenance of group's boundary *vis-à-vis* the other enables the *ethnie* to have the possibility of continuity across time.[68]

Leaning on Fredrick Barth, ethno-symbolism—as a third alternative in the study of nation and nationalism— has brought *ethnie* and ethnicity to the center of analysis.[69] Since we will discuss this at length in relation to some aspects of ethno-symbolism in the subsequent chapter, at this point it suffices to take ideal types of an *ethnie* and a nation from Smith and use them to understand the Oromo in relation to these two conceptual apparatus. According to Smith, an *ethnie* can be defined ideally as:

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[64]Fredrick Barth, "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries," in *Nationalism: Oxford Reader*, ed. John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 75.

[65]Merging the objectivist and subjectivist traits, Eghosa E. Osaghae provides a composite definitional framework that is helpful to understand an ethnic entity from both perspectives. Osaghae defines an ethnic group as human collectivity that shares "(1)a number of underlying objective characteristics associated with common descent like language and common culture; (2)which constitute the basis of identity as defined by 'insiders' who belong to the group and 'outsiders' who do not belong to the group but identify it as different from their own groups; (3) which generally become the basis for mobilizing group consciousness and solidarity, and which, (4) in certain situations, results in political activity." Osaghae, "A Re-examination of the Conception of Ethnicity in Africa as an Ideology of Inter-elite competition,"45.

[66]Fredrick Barth, ed., "Introduction" *in Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), 10-11.

[67]*Ibid*, 10-11; 13.

[68]*Ibid*, 14-15.

[69]Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (London: Routledge, 2009), 23.

> 'a named and self-defined human community whose members possess a myth of common ancestry, shared memories, one or more elements of common culture, including a link with a territory, and a measure of solidarity, at least among the upper strata'.[70]

If we decompose the definition into its pieces, we can distinguish objective and subjective aspects of an *ethnie*. From the objective point of view, we may consider the following characteristics: 'myth of common ancestry,' 'shared memories,' 'one or more elements of common culture,' 'link with territory.' As one may recall from our earlier descriptive discussion of the Oromo during the 16th century, they regarded themselves as children of *Orma*. They spoke a common language, *afaan* Oromo. They worshiped the same supreme divine entity, *waqa*. They believed to belong to a scared mythical homeland, *Mada Walaabu*. They had common/shared historical memories, *sena* Oromo/history of Oromo.[71]

When it comes to subjective traits, we may focus on two such traits presented in Smith's ideal type. On the one hand, we may consider the Oromo polity as 'a named and self-defined human community.' Though we may rely on some of the objective traits like the mythical common fatherhood as a point of reference to show the Oromo self-awareness about their collective entity, *Orommumma* would serve us better to make our point clear. Since it has already been discussed what *Orommumma* constitute, we will not discuss once again here what *Orommumma* means. Rather, we wish to use it in combination with another important aspect of Oromo culture, *mogaasaa*.

These two aspects of Oromo society give us an insight into Oromo's self-awareness of its collective socio-cultural boundary. Because once a nearby group had been assimilated through *mogaasaa*, the assimilation process occurred, which involved mutual recognition of

[70] *Ibid*, 27.

[71] Shared memories of the Oromo past had been preserved in two ways. First, there were some peoples within the *gada* rank whose main duty was to preserve the Oromo past orally. Here one would doubt the effectiveness of such mechanism of preserving the collective past, especially if the locus of observation is a written culture. It is evident that every details of the past could not be preserved using the individuals' memory. It seems inevitable that the past had been preserved in a very selective way. Though the degree varies, selectivity of the past is also something one cannot avoid even concerning a written record of the past. In every *cafe* conventions, laws were revised and had been incorporated into *sera* (custom/law) of Oromo. Since past experiences and customs had to be consulted before the new laws were promulgated, *sena* Oromo had served as a frame of reference into the past. From this perspective, we may assume that when part of the Oromo past had been preserved using the personal memories of the persons entrusted for this kind of particular task, it seems plausible that utmost emphases might had been given for those issues that were considered to be common interest of the Oromo polity. The Oromo also used an additional mechanism to make sure that part of the Oromo past would be passed down from generation to generation. For this purpose, Oromo elders who had already been retired from any public life of the Polity were responsible to look after their respective grandchildren. In so doing, they had been instrumental in passing "the framework of collective memory" of the Oromo Polity to the next generation. Cf. Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* 47-49.

both groups. While the assimilated group had to be willing to be totally absorbed into the Oromo society, which also involved the renaming of the new group by using one of the names of the Oromo sub-divisions, the Oromo society in turn had to provide equal socio-economic and political rights for the assimilated group.

Using Barth arguments, we can thus infer two basic points here: First, the cultural and social content of Oromo polity had been so much in flux that it would be a mere essentialist creed if one claimed that there is any essential component to Oromo identity. Instead of the essentiality of the substantial part of Oromo identity which has been in continuous flux, the maintenance and persistence of the markers— meaning the form *vis-à-vis* the content—of Oromo identity such as *afaan* Oromo has enabled the Oromo society to remain as an Oromo collective entity across times. Second, and most importantly, these two aspects are also very important to establish the fact that the Oromo had been self-aware of their collective identity at least during the 16th century.

On the other hand, we may also describe Oromo's collective awareness subjectively by using Smith's last characteristics of an *ethnie,* namely 'a measure of solidarity, at least among the upper strata.' It seems plausible that Smith wants to indicate some level of consciousness or awareness among the members of an *ethnie*, according to which the *ethnie* can be seen as the totality of its individual members.

Yet, Smith has also inserted the phrase in relation to solidarity, 'at least among the elites', only because he might have been constrained by European historicity that discourage the assumption of solidarity as a mass phenomenon concerning an *enthie* or a nation during pre-modern Europe. This point relating to European history will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

As far as our case is concerned, however, the Oromo polity had been neither vertically nor horizontally stratified from a political-economic perspective.[72] Since the Oromo polity in the period was an 'egalitarian' society in relative terms, the dichotomy of elite versus masses is not helpful to understand the Oromo polity. While the political life was both the duty and right of any adult man, public life was both the duty and right for anyone regardless of age and sex.

[72]Compare with the descriptive part of the current chapter.

Everyone participated in the public life according to the roles structurally assigned to them and did so also as an agent. On the basis of such analytic observations, it can be then argued that individual members of the Oromo society engaged in reciprocal recognition of each other via their mutual participation in the public life of the Oromo polity according to the various ranks of the '*gada* system.'[73]

On the basis of structural fabrics such as the *gada* system and active participations of agents in such structures and in numerous and recurrent ritual ceremonies; one may conclude that the Oromo polity in the period had a greater degree of solidarity among its individual members. Using Smith's ideal type for an *ethnie*, one may thus clearly see his ideal type neatly fitting to the empirical reality of the Oromo polity during the 16th century.

Yet, by using such knit-and fit strategy, one may also see that the Oromo polity during the same period neatly fits Smith's ideal type of a nation, as well. According to Smith, a nation can be ideally defined as:

> 'a named and self-defining human community whose members cultivate shared memories, symbols, myths, traditions and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or '"homelands", create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized laws'.[74]

As one may notice from the above ideal type, most of the traits that are listed as characteristics of a nation are also applicable to an *ethnie*, though one may notice that the substances of the common traits are phrased differently. Since they are clear and self-evident, we do not want to waste our time here discussing those features that are shared by the ideal nation and *ethnie*. Yet, it is important to point out here that such common features can be

[73]This point, as to how member's participation in the public life of the collective entity can be translated as measure of solidarity or collective consciousness will be discussed at length in the forthcoming chapter.

[74]This is the most update definition for a nation by Smith. Given that both *ethnies* and *nations* are very complex and ambiguous phenomena, their concepts show too much dynamism. One can see such dynamism even if we limit our focus with those different definitional frameworks Smith develops over the years to understand these two phenomena. Smith has revised his definitions many times if we compare the way he defines these concepts in his earlier works as opposed to the current most update versions of both phenomena as mentioned within the current section. These most update versions of both phenomena are cited from Smith's work on *Ethno-Symbolism.* And in particular the one that relate to the above definition of a nation inside the current page is taken from Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism,* 29. For better comparison of these updated version with earlier ones, see Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 8-28; Smith, "Nationalism and Historians," 47-48; Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 1-3, 65.

instrumental in highlighting that the conceptual boundaries of an *ethnie* and a nation significantly overlap and are not that much different from each other.

It seems plausible that the following two traits of a nation are the only ones that are missing from the ideal type of an *ethnie*: 'create and disseminate a distinctive public culture;' and 'standardized laws.' As far as the first one is considered, it seems more crucial for a nation, unlike an *ethnie,* only if there is a presumption that a nation is a logical outgrowth of a society that has been previously stratified or diversified along various social, economic, or political lines.

These lines could be classes, status units, or any parochial units that inhibit the society from attaining some level of homogeneity. Since a nation is presumed to have some level of homogeneity that transcends socio-cultural, economic and political lines of divisions, creation or dissemination of a public culture is important to understand a nation in terms of national consciousness, which in return is an indication of homogeneity within a nation though this might sound a circular argument.

Keeping the Oromo polity in mind, one may argue that the overall *gada* system with its numerous kinds of ritual ceremonies could be considered as manifestation of a public culture.[75] On the other hand, however, if the presumption behind the need for a public culture

[75]Here one might get the impression that applying the notion of 'public culture' to the African past is precarious. Yet, the basic question has to be, how can we understand a public culture? Or, what elements constitute a public culture? It seems plausible that the best solution is to be able to distinguish what is private and what it is not. Then, we may say that what is private is not public, or the other way around. But, doing so is not so an easy task. Jurgen Habermas, who is by far one of the most renowned sociologists in the present time and also a philosopher, has published a momentous work on 'public sphere.' Habermas's 'public sphere' is historically specific relating to the European 'bourgeoisies.' Though his inquiry was historically specific, the implication or theoretical horizon of his argument, however, transcends the spatial and temporal focuses of Habermas' 'public sphere'. Yet, to what extent can Habermas' 'public sphere' be elastic so that it could be extended to understand other specificities beyond the historicity of the bourgeois society within Europe and outside Europe is by itself a source of fierce debate among historians, sociologist and other related scholars in the field. It is interesting, however, to note the extent by which the concept of public sphere can be understood differently and used in a broad or narrow context, depending on the way it's interpreted. It must be underlined; however, we dare not claim Habermas' 'public sphere' is fully applicable to our case in its full-fledged context as developed by Habermas. Our intention is to highlight as to how the understanding of the concept of 'public sphere' is instrumental in grasping what is public, as opposed to what is not. In addition, based on our interpretation of 'public sphere,' there can be a possibility to apply to our case, as for example, when the 'public sphere' is extended into "European cultural sphere,'' on the basis of "the international cultural festivals which emerged after 1945," and "European rituals such as the dismantling of border barriers by young Europeans" are taken as indication of "Emerging European public sphere," as argued by Harmut Kaelble. Cf. "The European Public Sphere," *a lecture presented at Max Weber Lecture Series: MWP-LS 2007/09*(2007), 2-11. To understand the 'public sphere' from a different context, see Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," in *Special Issue in Honor of Francois Furet: Journal of Modern History; Chicago Journals* 72, no. 1(2000),153-182. To read originally from Habermas himself concerning the public sphere, see Jurgen Habermas, "The

is to justify the level of solidarity and level of homogeneity among members of a nation, do we then need this particular trait to justify whether the Oromo were a nation or otherwise?

Since the Oromo society during the 16th century were not stratified along political-economic lines, the creation of a public culture as means to form a relatively homogenous social entity from a previously heterogonous society would rather be less crucial in analyzing the features of Oromo polity in that period. The next chapter will attempt to show how the creation of a public culture might be more helpful in understanding a nation in the European context than from the perspective of the Oromo.

With regard to the second trait that we have mentioned, it is questionable whether it can be applicable to the Oromo context or not. When we consider how the adoption of the Roman law during early modern times in Europe harmonized jurisprudence within a particular jurisdiction of the rising absolutist state, we may understand 'standardized laws' in contrast to the earlier numerous local laws in force when feudalism was the order of the day.

It follows then that if 'standardized laws' in the context of common law (universal law *vis-à-vis* the previous numerous local laws in a given jurisdiction of a state) can be attributed to European Absolutist State for its adoption of the Roman Law during early modern times in Europe (between the 14th and 18th centuries), by simple analogy of common law we may say that 'standardized laws' is also applicable to the Oromo polity during the 16th century. Nevertheless, once we go beyond such simple analogy and the moment 'standardized laws' tends to have other dimensions beyond the context we have used here, then the application of 'standardized laws' to the Oromo context would rather sound shaky.

It has to be noted that our effort needs not to be seen as mere knit-and fit activity and consequently as obsessed with proving at any expense that the Oromo polity can be described as a nation. Although unfortunately it might seem so, this has not been our intention. The basic point we want to accomplish within the current subsection is to show the possibility that

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Public Shpere: An Encyclopedia Article(1964)," *in New German Critique*, no.3(1974),49-55 ; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991),pt.1&2.

one might understand the Oromo both as an *ethnie* and a nation. As far as the ideal types are taken as points of references, it has been demonstrated that the two concepts, *ethnie* and nation, overlap each other at least at the level of definition. Using the history of Oromo as a case, we have attempted to highlight how the conceptual and empirical boundary between an *ethnie* and a nation is highly fuzzy and blurred.

Instead of answering at this level the question whether the Oromo case can be best understood via the concept of a nation or an *ethnie*, we would like to conclude our chapter with a question. Does it seem plausible that the Oromo polity during the 16th century could be understood by these two concepts simultaneously? To contextualize the question in such a way so that our suggestion may highlight the possibility of a third alternative in the understating of nation *vis-à-vis* an *ethnie*, we will put the question differently in the following manner:

(1) Contrary to the modernist's argument that consider an *ethnie* and a nation as two discrete phenomena; or

(2) being in difference to the ethno-symbolic understanding of the two phenomena as two connected stages of transformation of a society in which the persistence of ethnic relations serves as the foundation for the process of nation formation; then

(3) does it make sense if one understand the concepts of *ethnie* and nation as two different ways of understanding and consequently representing one and the same empirical reality?

Chapter 4

Understanding Nation using a European Discursive Unit

When it is claimed that nation is the product of the modern world, then such claim—be it in a form of theoretical abstraction or empirically infused generalization—has to be tested for its validity. Having this in mind, it is then also evident that such conceptual claim has to gain its validity from the socio-historical context it purports to represent. Thus the main task of the present chapter is to understand the modernist claim that considers nation as the product of the modern era. To what extent is the modernist orthodoxy that confines the existence of a nation to the modern period valid? After all, when the present thesis attempts to understand the Oromo society of the 16th century as a nation, such a methodological stance brings the thesis into clear conflict with the existing universal axioms of a nation.

It has to be noted here that the present thesis is neither the first nor the only work that raises the question of validity concerning the exclusively modern presence of the nation. Adrian Hasting's seminal work, for instance, is important in this respect. Hasting has tried to challenge the modernists view concerning the nation by using a socio-historical examples from within and outside Europe. By citing some works by Anthony Smith and John Hutchison, Hasting also claims that he is "not alone in disagreeing."[1]

Given the formidable epistemological claims made by modernists, any work that attempts to understand a nation outside the modernists' tradition first has to reckon with the modernists' view of the nation. Though the current thesis, similarly to Hasting's work, raises some concerns of validity concerning the modernists' view of the nation, the particular socio-historical contexts that are used by the works to empirically test modernist assumptions are completely different. Neither the nature of the arguments nor the methodological arsenals are similar.

The current thesis is greatly defined by the methodological considerations discussed in one of the previous chapters. The thesis has to strictly adhere to its methodological premise of achieving hermeneutic understanding through hermeneutic practice. Thus the current chapter will not engage in any kind of theoretical or methodological criticism of the modernists'

[1]Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood,* 8-27.

epistemology and by-extension of other theoretical schools that understand the nation as an upshot of modernism. Rather, our effort will be channeled towards understanding the social and historical milieu that is at the backdrop of the modernists' view of the nation as the product of the modern era.

In addition to our effort to understand the particular European socio-historical context that is at the backdrop of modernist arguments, some kind of comparative analogy with the Oromo case will also be attempted. If we can identify some level of congruency between the two specificities, then the generalization and abstraction that are produced by using the European case will also be applicable by implication to the Oromo context.

If there is, however, a discrepancy between these two different socio-historical contexts, then the generalizations generated out of a European specificity will only be applicable to European empirical context. Consequently, such generalization will hardly be applicable to the empirical context that is specific to the Oromo. In short, if we can find a discrepancy between the two specificities, the validity of one of the universal axioms of modernist school that embedded the origin of the nation in the European spatial and temporal context will be at stake.

Remaining strictly within the confines of hermeneutic practice we will, therefore, structure our overall discussion in the current section in a question and answer format as a way of ultimately addressing our desired objective. Before we proceed with our task, it is important to consider the arguments Gadamer makes in respect to "The logic of Question and Answer." According to him, "hermeneutic phenomenon too implies the primacy of dialogue and structure of question and answer."[2] In his view, "a historical text is made the object of interpretation means that it puts a question to the interpreter…To understand a text means to understand this question. Thus a person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said."[3]

Throughout the current chapter, we will have a series of questions that will help us to understand from a close range the truth value of the modernists view about the nation. Thus our focus will be on understanding: How is the nation understood as the legacy of the modern

[2] Gadamer, *Thruth and Method*, 363-364.

[3] *Ibid*.

world? Why is the nation understood as being non-existent before the modern era? What factors have constrained scholars in the field to think that there is no logical foundation for a nation to exist in the pre-modern era? To what extent are the socio-historical specificities at the backdrop of the concept of the nation universally valid and, by implication, also consistent with the empirical reality of the Oromo people during the 16th century?

In compliance with the hermeneutic understanding, we will try thus to understand how nation is understood as a product of the modern era by analyzing the views some prominent authors articulate concerning the nation. How do we aim to achieve understanding of a nation by using the views of some prominent authors? This can only be achieved by understanding the socio-historical context from which the authors formulated their theory. To put it differently, we seek to understand 'the particular present' of a given author through reading the socio-cultural and historical specificity that is at the backdrop of his/her view of the nation. Before doing this, however, it is important to address some basic issues concerning the etymology of the word nation.

To what extent does the etymology of the word nation enhance the endeavor that seeks to understand a nation as a concept?

In order to properly grasp the aforementioned question, we have to rely on Koselleck's history of concept and apply his synchronic and diachronic mode of analysis to the etymology of a nation. Quite significant number of the literature at our disposal share the view that the word "Nation" was first used by the Romans, although there is disagreement among our sources concerning the particular context of the term's contemporary use.

According to Walker Connor, "the word *nation* comes from the Latin and, when first coined, clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. It was derived from the past participle of the verb *nasci*, meaning to be born. And hence the Latin noun, *nationem*, connoting breed or race."[4] In the view of Guido Zernatoo, who has conducted a thorough study on the history of the word nation itself, "the Latin word nation has the same stem as the word *natus*. Both have their origin in the word *nascor*, I am born, whose perfect form is *natus sum*, I have been born.

[4]Walker Connor, "Nation is a Nation, is s State, is an Ethnic Group, is a…" in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers, ed.* John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38.

A *natio* was therefore to the Romans something born."[5] Although Conor is silent on the issue concerning whom the term referred to, both Guido and Aira Kemilainen indicates that the word 'nation' was applied on outsiders, rather than the Roman themselves. Kemilainen notes that the word nation "had different meanings in ancient Rome. It meant a foreign tribe or people as well as race, a kind, a class."[6] Guido confirms this claim when he strongly argues that "the Romans never designate themselves as a *nation*."[7] He even goes to the extent to claim that the term had a derogatory connotation in the period, citing a speech from Cicero in support. According to Guido:

> The nation was a native community of foreigners. Cicero once speaks…of the Jews and the Syrians as *nationes natae servituti*, that is, of people born to servitude. From the previous examples and this last application it may clearly be concluded that the original concept of the word possessed a derogatory connotation. A nation was a number of foreign people, who were bound together by similarity of origin; but it was no superior origin. It was people who somehow stood outside, if not indeed below the stratum of Roman society, foreigners.[8]

The literature at our disposal confirm that during the Middle Ages the students at the University of Paris had been organized into four associations that functioned as unions and were called nations. The four nations with their respective titles, notes Guido, were "*l'honorable nation de France, la fidèle nation de Picardie, la vénérable nation de Normandie* and *la constante nation de Germanie.*"[9] The question, when looking at these names, is of course whether such designations coincided with the place/country from where these students originally came or not.

According to Max Weber, such unions did not correspond to nationality or place of origin in the modern sense, apart from the usage of "the name nation as a legal concept for an organized community."[10] Guido's opinion on this point seems in agreement with Weber.

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[5]Guido Zernatto, "Nation: the History of a Word," 13-14.

[6]Aira Kemilainen, "Nationalism: Problems Concerning the Word, the Concept and Classification," *Studia Historica*(1964), 13.

[7]Guido, 14.

[8]*Ibid*.

[9]*Ibid*, 16-19.

[10]Max Weber, "The Nation," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2000), 11-12.

Guido argues that "the *nation de France* comprised all students who spoke the Romance languages…The Picard nation was set aside for the Dutch, the Norman for people of the North-east [France], the Germanic for the students from England and Germany."[11]

Alhough Hugh Seton Watson has not explicitly stated that there is congruence between the country of origin and those student's unions, he seems to be caught up in the middle regarding the issue when he says that "many medieval universities attracted many students from other lands besides their own. These were placed in *nationes,* named after the territories from which the largest number of each originated, but including also persons from other countries."[12]

We find Conor's position on this particular issue ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to feel uneasy about the 'inappropriate' usage of the term in the period.[13] On another occasion, he provides a rather different definition that is closer to the present meaning of a nation; "a blood–related group."[14] Despite the presence of such diverse interpretations, one can still capture the dynamic aspect of the word nation. It appears that the word has gradually transformed into a referent of particular community/collective entity under the umbrella of language affinity.[15]

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[11]Guido, 16-17.

[12]Hugh Seton Watson, "Old and New Nations," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers,* ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 134-135.

[13]Connor seems to be dismayed with the misappropriation of the term when he argues that "unfortunately terms used to describe literary license and nation certainly proved to be no exception. Thus, at some medieval universities, a student's *nationem* designated the sector of the country from whence he came." To have a better grasp of his argument, we traced his foot note and we got the following justification: "A recent example of the loose manner in which 'nation' may be used is a work, published in the United States, entitled *Lesbian Nation*. Cf. Connor, "A Nation is a Nation," 38 and for its footnote see John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism Oxford Readers*, 328-329.

[14]Connor here argues that the term "when introduced into the English language in the late 13th c, it [nation] was with its primary connotation of the blood-related group." Cf. Connor, "A Nation is a Nation,"38. Since Connor has come up with a view very different from the rest of our sources, we find it wise to retrace his source and see the usage. We have presented what we have found from Connor's sources as follow as: "**Nation** (from fw *nation*, F, *nationem*, L-breed, race) has been in common use in English from 1 C13 originally with primary sense of racial group rather than a politically organized grouping. Since there is obvious overlap between these senses, it is not easy to date the emergence of the predominant modern sense of a political formation…There was from eC17 a use of **the nation** to mean the whole people of a country, often in contrast, as still in political argument, with some group within it." All emphasis in this quoted passage are by the author himself. Cf. Raymond Williams, "Nationalis" *Key Words: A vocabulary of Culture and Society*(New York: Oxford University, 1976),213-214

[15]As we can see from the previous footnote, Connor gets his information from a descriptive dictionary of whose sources are hardly traceable. Though Guido mentioned his sources, (De Natura Deorum, III, 18, 47), but I

Concerning the term's evolution, Guido convincingly shows that term was gradually appropriated by the aristocratic class in France in a way so as to refer to a status group *vis-à-vis* the masses. As an example, Guido quotes Joseph de Maistre(1753-1821) who is believed to inquire "What is a nation?" and also to reply that "it is the sovereign and the aristocracy."[16]

Although the term had begun to be loosely associated in France with the aristocratic circle in early as 1308, it total appropriation by the aristocratic class only occurred at the eve of the French Revolution. It seems plausible that in the wake of the French Revolution and during the ensuing age of Liberalism, the aristocratic elite's monopoly over the word 'nation' came to an end as the middle class elites gradually began to appropriate the word for themselves.[17]

From the 18th century onwards, the term eventually became therefore, a "word of fashion,"[18] borrowing the phrase by Guido. Yet, as we have indicated earlier, the term remains to be the subject of diverse interpretations and understandings from the very moment it has been formulated as a concept. Cases in point are Fitche's and Renan's opposing ways of formulating the idea of the nation. To further elucidate this point, let us borrow some lines from both Kemilainen and Guido, before summing up our discussion about the etymology of the nation.

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hardly made any effort to access it. It was originally published in, *Review of Politics*, 1944 edition. As for Watson, his source is J. G. Herder's "Reflection on the Philosophy of the history of Mankind," which I could not access despite my best efforts. Yet, it has to be noted that retracing the sources could have been very helpful to learn about how the term had actually been used in the period. As it has already been mentioned, it can be established that the term had been used as a name for various student unions. Kemilainen notes that "the boundaries between countries, peoples and tribes seemed rather obscure to people in the Middle Ages, but most often the word "natio" did mean a separate group of human beings." According to her, since the Latin language was the lingua franca in the period, the meaning of the term during the Roman had period had persisted into the Middle Age. Though her argument sounds very persuasive, the fact that there were also students from Paris and from the nearby within "*l'honorable nation de France",* we are obliged to take her argument with some reservations. Cf. Kemilainen, 13-14 in comparisons to Guido, 16-19.

[16]As quoted by Guido, 22.

[17]Here Guido informs us that the term was first used in reference of "Three groups of aristocrats (estates)…the bishops…the nobility and the third estate…Thus there arose country or provincial estates which were also designated by the term 'nation'." Taking a quoting from, Guido attempts to indicate how Montesquieu's speech were misquoted and given unintended meanings. In way to address the errors made while quoting Montesquieu's speech, Guido forwards his opinion as: "(Under the first two dynasties [of France] the nation was often assembled, that is the nobility and the bishops. The common people were not taken into consideration.) This means nothing more than that at the time of Montesquieu the word nation, which had passed into the French tongue, was understood in the sense of a representative assembly, a representation by aristocrats." Cf. Guido, 21-23.

[18]*Ibid*, 23.

According to Kemilainen, "in the 18th century the word 'nation' became in England and France almost analogous with 'state,' while in Germany it usually preserved the same meaning as the 'nation,' i.e., ethnical group, in ancient Rome."[19] Guido, citing from one of his sources, strongly argues that:

> "It is to be noted that the words nation and state have never been used as much as they are today" wrote d'Argenson in the year 1754; "Under Louis XIV the two words were never spoken, and one did not have so much as an idea of them." That is understandably. Under Louis XIV, king and state were one. Whoever meant "state," said "king," and whoever meant "king" said "state." The "nation," the sum total of the elite, played no role. It was not the state.[20]

It has been attempted so far to highlight at least three basic points: Firstly, the original meaning of the word nation seems, when viewed from a synchronic plane, to have been used by the Romans to describe the "other," so much so that the Romans would have considered applying the name to themselves as something inappropriate. The Roman case is very interesting because it shows that for the period's hegemonic acting agency, the term had basically no real appeal. It would be of course interesting to know the reaction of those peoples that were designated by the Romans as *natio*.

Secondly, by using the diachronic plane of analysis, we have seen how the word 'nation' had been gradually appropriated over time by various groups until it became a fashion word from the 18th century on. Thirdly and most importantly, we have seen that the word assumed its present sense only after the modern period. Even in respect of its modern meaning, as it has been discussed elsewhere, nation has been highly debated ever since Fitche and Renan have conceptualized the nation using their respective 'particular present.'

It has been confirmed that the term nation was given its present sense only after the advent of the modern era. Where does this take us? Does this strengthen the modernist claim that nations did not exist before the modern era? On the surface, the discussion presented so far would seem to sustain the modernist argument concerning the nation. To put it otherwise, had the conceptual representation of the phenomenon of a nation been congruent with what the

[19]Kemilainen, 16.

[20]Guido, 23.

etymology of the term tells us, we could have concluded that nation has indeed no presence in the pre-modern era.

The problem is, however, nation as a normative universal logo tends to transcend the spatial and temporal limits imposed upon it by modernists and other alike. Such tendency to surpass the spatial and temporal limits imposed upon it by modernists, the dual aspect of a nation, the phenomenon and its multidimensional conceptual appearances, has prompted many research endeavors to test whether nation is truly a mere *a posterior* of the modern era, as it has been claimed by modernists, or it rather stretches retrospectively into the pre-modern era using its conceptual coordinates as a springing board.

World history, which is described by Gadamer as 'a great dark book,' is the only supreme authority that can settle the question whether the nation is a mere logical outcome of the modern era or it existed prior to that. As indicated elsewhere, scholars like Hasting have tried to see the application of the present understanding of a nation to the pre-modern era of Europe, using England as a prototype.

In contrast, the current thesis is trying to see the application of the concept of nation, as it is understood in its present meaning, to the same pre-modern era but to a historical singularity outside Europe. The two works share one thing in common; they use world history in the context of dialectics between the part and the whole. While Hasting focuses on reexamining the historical past that of England in particular, the current thesis attempts to make use of a peripheral section of world history, the Oromo during the 16th century.

Nation in its present sense takes into consideration the amorphous definition that sees nation as a community of people sharing some or almost all of the following traits: common territory, common political territory, common state, shared culture, shared historical experience, common language, and common religion and, among others.

As it has been already mentioned, the current understating of the nation is so amorphous that any ideal type or working definition that has been so far generated as a result of combination of the above traits is not immune to criticism or objections. Hence we do not have a universally accepted, equally authoritative working definition of the nation as far as various schools of thought are considered.

For example, according to Otto Bauer, "the question of the nation can only be approached from the concept of national character."[21] When it comes to national character, he provisionally defines it "as the complex of physical and mental characteristics that distinguishes one nation from others."[22] Bauer's provisional definition about a nation is one case among many others.

As one can see from Bauer's definition, the current meaning of nation has the potential to be extended retrospectively to the pre-modern era, irrespectively of the fact that there had been no single society that had designated/referred to itself as nation in the modern sense of the word. The issue therefore is not whether there had been societies in the past that had used the word nation to designate themselves or not. The real issue has to be, do we have any given society in the past or in the present that can be understood or represented by the concept of a nation?

To put it differently, any given socio-historical reality, be it English or Oromo, has/had they been at any given stage of their history a kind of collective entity that can be understood as a nation? With such goal in mind, the main focus of the present thesis is thus to test whether the modernist epistemology concerning the nation is applicable to the Oromo society during the 16th century. To this end, we pursue our endeavor by trying to understand how nation is conceptualized by Ersnet Gellner who is the most renowned and leading modernist thinker in the field of nation and nationalism.

Before presenting the provisional definition of a nation that has been put forward by Gellner, let us begin our discussion of Gellner's views at a point he tend to be very skeptical about. Gellner says, "it is…debatable whether the normative idea of the nation, in its modern sense, did not presuppose *the prior* existence of the state."[23] Then he raises the following question, "What then is this contingent, but in our age seemingly universal and normative, idea of the

[21]Otto Bauer, "The Nation," in *Mapping the Nation, ed.* Gopal Balakrishnan (London: New Left Review and Verso, 1996), 40.

[22]*Ibid*, 40.

[23]Gellner, "Nations and Nationalism," 6.

nation?"[24] After indicating his concerns, Gellner turns directly into the task of defining the concept. According to him, nation can be understood in the following manner:

> (1.) Two men are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating. (2.) Two men are of the same nation if and only if they recognize each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, *nations maketh man*; nations are the artefacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities. A mere category of persons (say, occupants of a given territory, or speakers of a given language, for example) becomes a nation if and when the members of the category firmly recognize certain mutual rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership of it.[25]

In a nutshell, Gellner's provisional definitions revolve around two basic issues. One, culture is seen as a bond that facilitates solidarity and communication among the members of a nation, and second, the union that results in such bondage is contingent upon reciprocal recognition of fellow members among each other.[26] Keeping such definitional framework in his mind, Gellner insists:

> If we invoke the sleeping-beauty nations, neither possessing a state nor feeling the lack of it, against the nationalist doctrine, we tacitly accept its social metaphysic, which sees nations as the bricks of which mankind is made up. Critics of nationalism, who denounce the political movement but tacitly accept the existence of nations, do not go far enough. The great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way round…It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round.[27]

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[24]*Ibid*,7.

[25]*Ibid*.

[26]Seeing culture as a medium of communication and a community of nation that results in such communication through the reciprocal recognition of members brings Gellner's assumption in parallel with the views of Karl W. Deutsch. Deutsch proposes a functional definition that understands nationality as the result of efficiencies and complementarities of social communication. Social communication "consists in the ability to communicate more effectively, and over a wider range of subjects, with members of one large group than with outsiders." See Karl W. Deutsch, "Nationalism and Social Communication," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers,* ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 26-27.

[27]Gellner, "Nationalism and High Cultures," in *Nationalism: Oxford Readers,* ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 64.

As it can be seen from this quote, Gellner wants to show that any effort to trace the presence of a nation before the modern era would be rather futile since nation is the product of nationalism, which itself is highly embedded in the modern period. One may ask here, why does it sound invalid to claim that nation existed before the modern era? Is this so only because nationalism created nations during the age of nationalism, that is, the 19th century?

If we rely merely on the above quoted argument, it would indeed seem that the issue of nationalism is the sole reason that discourages any attempt to look for nations before the modern era. Yet, nationalism is not the main factor, contrary to the fact that it might seem so when Gellner insists that nation is the legacy of the modern era. According to him, the basic reason is rather to be found in the socio-cultural, economic and political reality during the pre-modern period. In Gellner's view, the objective conditions of the pre-modern world had not been favorable for nations to exist if a nation is understood as some kind of collective entity that unites culture and state.[28]

Gellner, therefore, comes up with a model of his own in which he has systematically examined whether it was possible for a nation to exist during the pre-modern era or not. He divides the entire history of mankind into three stages, namely the pre-agrarian, the agrarian, and the industrial.[29] During the pre-agrarian stage, socio-economic organizations were in such a rudimentary hunting-gathering stage that the state as "a stable specialized order-enforcing institution, does not really arise."[30]

Though both the nature and the relative strength of states may vary, Gellner insists most agrarian societies had a state. When such societies are nevertheless examined in cross-section, they consist of various strata that are further stratified vertically and horizontally. The elite in such polity, named as "agro-literate polity," was horizontally stratified along lines of occupations while the polity was also vertically stratified, with "laterally insulated communities of agricultural producers" at the bottom.[31] In Gellner's view, "perhaps the

[28]Cf. Gellner, "Nations and Nationalism,"9-55.

[29]*Ibid*,5.

[30]*Ibid*.

[31]*Ibid*,9.

central, most important fact about agro-literate society is this: almost everything in it militates against the definition of political units in terms of cultural boundaries."[32]

Since such stratification and diversification within the agro-literate society was, according to Gellner, not only attractive but ensured the extractive and exploitative nature of both the state and the privileged classes, he goes on to claim that "for both the ruling stratum as a whole, and for the various sub-strata within it, there is great stress on cultural differentiation rather than on homogeneity."[33] Owing to the prevailing objective conditions, thus "no one has an interest in promoting cultural homogeneity [among the peasantry]."[34] "Such [agro-literate] societies," argues Gellner further, "simply do not possess the means for making literacy near universal and incorporating the broad masses of the population in a high culture…"[35]

The presence of high-culture that acted as a cliff separating the elite from the illiterate agrarian mass on the one hand, and numerous other horizontal cultural cleavages both within the upper and the lower strata on the other hand, makes it difficult, according to Gellner, to talk about shared culture in the pre-modern society. He thus insists that "any definition of nations in terms of shared culture is another net which brings in far too rich a catch…The agrarian world simply could not be so neat."[36]

In contrast, industrial societies, argues Gellner, possess the objective conditions that can sustain the formation and existence of a nation. Based on this claim, Gellner concludes:

> The establishment of pervasive high cultures (standardized, literacy- and education-based systems of communication), a process rapidly gathering pace throughout the world, has made it seem, to anyone too deeply immersed in our contemporary assumptions, that nationality may be definable in terms of shared culture…The great, but valid, paradox is this: nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than, as you might expect, the other way round. It is not the case that the 'age of nationalism' is a mere summation of the awakening and political self-assertion of this, that, or the other nation. Rather, when general

[32] *Ibid*,11.

[33] *Ibid*,10-11

[34] *Ibid*,10-12

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*,11; in particular reference to the quoted passage, see, 54

> social conditions make for standardized, homogeneous, centrally sustained high cultures, pervading entire populations and not just elite minorities, a situation arises in which well-defined educationally sanctioned and unified cultures constitute very nearly the only kind of unit…[37]

Based on this, one can see that the agro-literate society in Gellner's theory is presented as one polarity within a dichotomy in which industrial societies stand on the other end. Structured in this way, the validity of Gellner's model depends on the trueness or falseness of two hypotheses, in as much as the validity of one presupposes the invalidity of the other.

Leaving details aside, the two hypotheses can be formulated in the following way: First, the objective reality that characterizes pre-modern societies encourages the formation of nations or provides possibility for a nation to exist. The second hypothesis posits that nation is a mere logical legacy of the industrial society. Consequently, the validity of the second hypothesis necessarily depends on the first hypothesis to remain invalid.

Having framed Gellner's model in such a way, it seems appropriate at this point to raise one basic question. To what extent is Gellner's agro-literate model equally and universally applicable across time and space? To what extent is his model, which is in itself a simplification of empirical reality, representative of socio-historical specificities around the world? To put it otherwise, how far is Gellner's agro-literate society consistent with the nitty-gritty of word history that remains a "great dark book," as far as the pre-modern period in general and pre-colonial Africa in particular are considered?[38]

As one may recall from the previous empirically focused discussion presented in chapter 3, Gellner's agro-literate model cannot adequately explain the Oromo historical specificity during the 16th century. On the one hand, we find the Oromo in the period entirely an agrarian polity without a written culture. One the other hand, we can see that the Oromo society was "egalitarian" in the sense that there was almost no inequality from a political-economic

[37] *Ibid*,54-55.

[38] These questions are raised in relation to the issue of validity concerning Gellner's model. Borrowing some lines from John Breuilly, it may be argued also that "one should be clear about what justifies 'theory' in relation to the subject of nationalism. First, theory has itself to be subject to some kinds of tests against evidence. So it is crucial that theory be framed in such a way as to allow of such tests." Cf. John Breuilly, "Approaches to nationalism," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, vol.1 (London: Routledge, 2000), 324.

perspective. While the political space was only open to any competent and willing men, the 'public sphere' was open to anyone.

The Oromo polity spoke one language and shared the same belief system. Every member participated in the public life via different roles and duties assigned to him/her. Member's participation had been moderated by a mix of agency and various structural frameworks. Using their socialization and assimilative mechanisms such as the *mogaasaa* institution as a point of reference, one may also suggest the presence of collective consciousness in the sense of the Oromo "self" *vis-à-vis* the "other".

Finally, it has been shown how the interplay between power and culture in the Oromo case form an almost total harmony. Whatever kind of analytic framework one may apply; it is hardly possible to think of the Oromo during the period in question as a stratified society. The Oromo did not have an independent and well differentiated elite group with its peculiar high culture that could be contrasted to the 'folk' culture of the masses. Analytical distinctions such as elite versus masses, high culture versus 'folk' culture, privileged versus unprivileged subgroups fails to be fruitful when one attempts to use them for the purpose of understanding the socio-cultural and political-economic fabrics of the Oromo society during the 16th century.

Using the above comparative analogy between Gellner's 'agro-literate' society and the Oromo during the 16th century, one may get a glimpse as to how the socio-historical specificities at the backdrop of Gellner's model are mainly applicable to a European historicity only. One may notice that such definition of the nation hardly takes into consideration other specificities, such as the case of the Oromo.

It would be, nevertheless, too premature to draw any conclusions at this point. It is wise to get insights from another prominent modernist scholar in order to understand where Oromo could be placed in the modernist understanding of a nation. This time, we turn to John Breuilly, who is another key modernist thinker. We are interested in him only because as a historian, Breuilly makes use of history to refute the validity of the perennialists' view of nation.

By reading Breuilly's refutation of the perennialists view of nation, one may gain at least three sorts of advantages: firstly, it helps to identify the basic element that remains

instrumental in the understanding of a nation; secondly, it shows what kind of historical ammunitions modernists have been using to refute any claim that traces the existence of nations to the pre-modern era; and finally, it helps to answer the question whether those historical evidences, which have been used by modernists to substantiate their arguments *vis-à-vis* the perennialists are drawn from 'world history' or from European cases only.

Using the question "When is the Nation?" as the core topic, the center for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism (ASEN) at the London School of Economics and Political Science moderated a debate among some distinguished speakers associated with the three schools of thoughts. The modernist school was represented, among others, by John Breuilly.

To the inquiry, "How old is an old nation?" Breuilly swiftly states his position by declaring that "I take a modernist position on nation and nationalism. I dispute the primordialist and perennialist claims that there are pre-modern nations and even nationalisms."[39] Turning to the arguments of the perennialist by Anthony Smith, as it is summarized in his meta-theoretical work, *Nationalism and Modernism*, Breuilly expresses his doubts concerning the validity of perennialists' arguments.

According to him, the arguments made by the perennial school tend to assume "the form of general assertion accompanied by brief examples." He then examines and consequently refutes the possibility of England as a prototype of a nation as suggested by Adrian Hasting and others. "If the perennialist argument can be refuted for this strong case," Breuilly argues, "*a fortiori* the refutation may be assumed to work for weaker cases."[40]

In order to establish a common framework, he has borrowed two definitions of the nation from two different works by Anthony Smith. The first one defines nation as "a named human population occupying an historic territory and sharing common myths and memories, a public culture, and common laws and customs for all members."[41] The second definition that Breuilly has borrowed is a modified version of the previous definition by Smith.

[39]Breuily, "Dating the Nation," 15.

[40]*Ibid*,15.

[41]*Ibid*,16.

Among other things added and modified in the second definition, two terms capture Breuilly's attention. According to him, "all members" from the first definition is omitted and is replaced by "self-defined" in the modified version of the second definition by Smith. Though I am not fully convinced with the differential implication of the two terms as it sounds so for Breuilly, the point that Breuilly wants to establish here by using these two terms as a point of references is worthy of note.

Breuilly's concern seems to emanate from the implication that would result from the replacement of "all members" by "self-defined." Such reformulation of the definition of nation, Breuilly remarks, would confine nation as representation of the elites and by-extension excluded the mass from being considered as part of a nation. If nation were to be considered as an exclusive domain of the elites, then it would have been difficult for Breuilly to refute the presence of a nation before the modern period.[42]

Having explicitly noted his concern and methodological stance, Breuilly goes on to examine the possibility of England being the oldest nation. Tracing the origin of Englishness back as far as AD 731, Breuilly suggests that "'English' is subordinate to a primary Roman Christian and secondary Northumbrian dynastic value."[43] He insists that before the late Anglo-Saxon period, England was divided among various competing political entities, some of whom used the name "English" to describe themselves.[44]

Following 1066, successive Norman rulers established a Norman rule for some centuries without abandoning the name "English".[45] Breuilly then argues that "the terms 'England' and 'English' served to describe this government, its ruling elite and even occasionally to appeal to the subjects of this rule. The term 'English' continued but changed its meaning, and began to be accompanied by the term 'England' to describe the territory of the English."[46]

[42]*Ibid*,16-17.

[43]*Ibid*,19.

[44]*Ibid*,21.

[45]*Ibid*,21-23.

[46]*Ibid*, 21.

The central point that Breuilly finds important to make is that "continuity in governmental institutions does not automatically mean continuity in names and cultural identity." "The Normans," he argues, "were a conquest elite; perhaps 8, 000 people imposed their rule on a population of 1.5 million." The other important point that he wants to show is the fact that the ethnic component as a means of mobilizing the masses did not happen in England.

In his criticism against the use of the 'Hundred Years War' as justification for the mobilization of the ethnic mass, Breuilly argues that the notion of the 'defence of the realm' was only "an appeal to the 'English nation' defined as the subjects of the English crown. There is arguably an ethnic component in the descent myths but these confined to elites. There is no ethnic component to the appeal to the common interest."[47]

After looking through the reformation period in order to strengthen his argument, Breuilly concluded his refutation of the perennialist ideas in the following way:

> I concluded that nation, or rather national identity in the sense of certain processes for constructing national identity, existed only at the elite level, in discontinuous and fragmented forms, in two different worlds of meaning (ethnographic and the political) which were connected only causally to each other, subordinate to Christian and dynastic principles, arguments and images, often marginalized when in conflict with Christian and dynastic concerns, and having little in the way of a 'public culture' which could maintain, reinterpret and transmit national identity…regnal identity was important in elite politics because England had developed strong, centralized state institutions. However, one cannot jump from that achievement to any assumption about a strong and significant sense of national identity at popular level and certainly not to any kind of nationalism.[48]

As it can be seen from the historical cases Breuilly has used to justify his position, the point he finds important to emphasize is that national identity has to be understood as a mass phenomenon. As it will be shown later, defining national identity as a mass phenomenon is the one point that enjoys a relative consensus among scholars in the field of nation and nationalism study. This is why Breuilly makes this point central to his argument, for defining national identity as a mass phenomenon offers him a common framework with other schools of thought in the field.

[47] *Ibid*, 26-27.

[48] *Ibid*, 28-31.

If by using European history he could disprove the presence of national identity as a mass phenomenon during the pre-modern era, this would make it a daunting task for perennialists to maintain their position. After all, any argument concerning the issue under discussion could only be valid if they can be verified by using history as a reference. Having such a methodological weak link in the perennialists argument would—unless the current 'usage of a nation' is not significantly altered—make it likely that the modernists' view maintains its epistemological dominance *vis-à-vis* the perennialist view of the nation.

Walker Conor, for example, who presented his work under the title "The dawning of nations" with the purpose of refuting Breuilly's work, disagrees with Breuilly concerning the dating of nations. He holds also reservations against Breuilly's and by-extension Smith's working definition of a nation. Yet, he concurs with Breuilly on some points. Conor admits that "'national consciousness is a mass, not an elite phenomenon, and the masses, until quite recently, semi-or totally illiterate, were quite mute with regard to their sense of identity (ies)'."[49]

Here it must be noted that Conor's emphasis on the illiteracy of the masses is not meant to define literacy as some kind of *a priori* for a nation to exist. Rather, the importance of literacy needs to be understood in terms of its facilitating capacity to harmonize mass culture with elite culture. Ultimately he nevertheless agrees with Breuilly's position "that one cannot safely ascribe national consciousness to a people without evidence that it was not restricted to an elite, that it is necessary to establish that it was shared by other segments of the putative nation."[50]

As far as ethno-symbolism is considered, one may argue that it has a strong methodological foundation *vis-à-vis* the other schools for two basic reasons. First, as an emergent system of thought in the field of nation and nationalism, ethno-symbolism has been developed as a third alternative in the field by capitalizing on the fore-tradition it has inherited from modernists and perennialists.

[49]Connor, "The Dawning of Nations," in *When is the Nation? Towards an Understanding of theories of Nationalism,* ed. Atsuko Ichijo and Gordana Uzelac (London: Rotledge, 2005),42.

[50]*Ibid*.

Second, owing to the fact that *ethnie* and ethnicity has a lot to share with nation and nationalism, bringing the former two concepts at the center of analysis in the process of understanding nation and nationalism has endowed ethno-symbolism with a methodological leverage. Smith for instance, argues that "neither modernists nor perennialists had much to say about ethnicity and its role in the formation of nations."[51]

In one of his collected works, Smith claims that "…while national identity is mainly a modern phenomenon, pre-modern ethnic communities and identities are widespread and processes of national formation and representation are found in all epochs."[52] If we read carefully between the lines, we can clearly see some gray areas in the previous passage taken from Smith.

On the one hand, Smith seems to accept the modernist view about a nation. He says that "national identity is mainly a modern phenomenon," which, by-implication would also, mean that nation itself is primarily a modern phenomenon. We may ask here, why did Smith insert the adverb 'mainly,' when he could have simply said that 'national identity is a modern phenomenon?'It seems plausible that Smith might not been convinced that national identity and nationhood are from a historical point of view necessarily specific to the modern period. It occurs to me that Smith had hardly any other option than positing his reservation against the modernist orthodoxy that views nation as a byproduct of the modern period.

Because, any intent to go beyond such skeptic position and prove the presence of nations during the pre-modern period would have been tantamount reckoning with the modernists' firepower that is endowed with a rich body of historical evidences as far as European history is considered. It seems plausible, therefore, that ethno-symbolists, like perennialists, might have been bothered by the thorny issue of national consciousness. Without being able to prove the presence of 'national consciousness' or national identity in the past, it remains a daunting task to disprove the modernist position that confines the advent of a nation to the modern era.

[51]Smith, *Ethnosymbolism*, 26.

[52]Smith, "The problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval and Modern?" *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999),97.

As it has been discussed at length at our reading of both Gellner and Breuilly, the ethnographic boundary had hardly been congruent with the boundary of the state, which by itself was a heterogeneous whole during Europe's pre-modern era. As long as the understanding of 'national consciousness' or national identity is contingent on the inclusion of the masses, it remains a difficult task to justify the presence of these two phenomena before the pre-modern period in Europe.

Using the views from Gellner and Breuilly**,** European states may be depicted as loose entities consisting of discrete parts owing to the fact that their respective societies were highly divided along horizontal and vertical lines, a fact that discouraged the identification of the masses with the hegemonic elite within the framework of a collective identity.

Facing the formidable arsenal of the modernists' historical argumentations, Smith attempts to bypass the methodological impasse and reach the pre-modern era for the study of nation and nationalism through other methodological routes. Smith and his fellow ethno-symbolic thinkers have devised numerous strategies. The first breakthrough would be to dismantle the modernist dogma that demands nationalism to be seen as an *a priori* of nation.

Ever since John A. Armstrong's seminal work, 'Nations before nationalism,' ethno-symbolists have persuasively argued that nations can occur before nationalism.[53] Such stance has enabled ethno-symbolism to trace the process concerning the formation of national identity deep into the pre-modern period without the methodological necessity to reckon with the modernist view that considers nationalism as historically specific to the modern period.

In order to revitalize the pre-modern world as a resource for the understanding of nation and nationalism, Smith and his fellow ethno-symbolist thinkers have borrowed an important historical time from the French Annales school, that is, Fernand Braudel's *'la longue durée.'*[54] The adoption of Braudel's *longue durée* in the study of nation and nationalism has

[53]Cf. John A. Armstrong, "Nations before Nationalism," in *Nationalism: Critical Concepts in Political Science,* ed. John Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, vol.1 (London: Routledge, 2000), 216-243.

[54]For a brief overview of ethno-symbolic views, see Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchison, eds., "History and National Destiny: An Introduction," *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics*(Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004),1-4; John A. Armstrong, "Definitions, Periodization, and prospects for the *longue durée*," in *History and National Destiny: Ethnosymbolism and its Critics*, ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Hutchison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004),9-17; Smith, "'Basic themes of ethno-symbolism' and 'The formation of nations'," *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*(London: Rutledge, 2009),23-40, 41-59.

been one of the strengths of ethno-symbolism. Because *longue durée* provides a framework for involving the pre-modern era in a historical analysis that can trace the formation of a nation deep into the past.

Keeping this in mind, if we return our attention to the other part of the same quotation by Smith, namely that "pre-modern ethnic communities and identities are widespread and processes of national formation and representation are found in all epochs," one may see which route Smith has followed to bypass the modernist view concerning the nation as an inherently modern phenomenon.

Why does ethno-symbolism commit itself to the diachronic analysis of the formation of a nation? Since the need to analyze the ethnic core and the symbolic aspects of ethnicity as a means to understand nation and nationalism is the basic methodological stance that enables ethno-symbolism to remain as the third alternative *vis-à-vis* the modernists' and perennialists' views of a nation, historical inquiry into the pre-modern period proves to be indispensable, rather than just a choice to be taken by ethno-symbolism.

Ethno-symbolism views ethnic communities as ubiquitous phenomena during the pre-modern era.[55] On the basis of such presumptions, modern nations are thus seen as the outcome of the persistence of collective identity embedded in the solidarity of members of the ethnic

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[55]Smith makes a distinction between ethnic communities and ethnic categories. "Ethnic categories," Smith explains, "are populations distinguished by outsiders as possessing the attributes of a common name or emblem, shared cultural element (usually language or religion), and a link with a particular territory." On the other hand, "Ethnic communities or ethnies," according to Smith, "are human populations distinguished by both members and outsiders as possessing the attributes of: (1) an identifying name or emblem; (2) a myth of common ancestry;(3) shared historical memories and traditions;(4) one or more elements of common culture;(5) a link with an historic territory or 'homeland';(6) a measure of solidarity, at least among the elites." Cf. Smith, "Nationalism and Historians," *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12-13. As far the above typology in relation to ethnic categories and ethnic communities are concerned, I have some reservation.. 'Ethnic categories' as a different social unit from the 'ethnic community' is rather confusing and ambiguous than being helpful analytically. Even Smith, along with his colleague, himself has noticed how in adequate such typology when he remarks his difference to Handelman's(1997) typology from which Smith has borrowed his typology. There Smith and his colleague argue, " Handelman's typology is useful, but it fails to capture the specifically 'ethnic' content of an 'ethnic community' or ethnie." Cf. Hutchison and Anthony D. Smith, eds., "Introduction," *Ethnicity: Oxford Readers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5-7. Such conception, 'ethnic categories as ascribed by the others,' contradicts with our understanding of 'ethnic groups' in terms of Barth's subjective framework, "…the characteristic of self-ascription and ascription by others." It is important to see this subjective element of an ethnic entity from the following two points: One, ethno-symbolism considers ethnic phenomena as ubiquitous throughout history; two, ethno-symbolism give emphasis for subjective 'inner world' of social units such as *ethnies* and nations. Having these two points in mind, then, what is the place of 'ethnic categories' in the study of the process of nation formation? Though a lot can be said upon this point, it suffice to mention that such categorization of the 'ethnic' world further complicate rather than rendering methodological simplification in a bid to bring ethnic entities and ethnicity in the center of nation and nationalism studies.

community that forms the core of the nation. If modern nations are highly embedded in their ethnic past, then it seems wise methodologically to look into the ethnic pasts of modern nations for understanding the process of nation formation. To this end, ethno-symbolism attempts to analyze the process of ethno-genesis during the pre-modern era in order to understand the context in which a particular modern nation came into being.

In my opinion, the adoption of Braudel's *longue durée* as a basic framework of inquiry to explore the link between various kinds of processes of ethno-genesis during the pre-modern period and the process of nation formation is by far the greatest leap forward in the study of nations and nationalism. As it has been shown throughout the current chapter, the other two schools highly depend on historical resources in order to justify their respective methodological positions and invalidate each other's positions.

It is self-evident that historical interpretations play a paramount role in the understanding of nation and nationalism for any theoretical abstraction of the nation has to gain its validity from social and historical specificities. Yet, if a nation is seen as a phenomenon that transcends the European particularity, then to what extent is 'world history' used as a source to justify or invalidate the various theses in the study of nation and nationalism?

Using *la longue durée* as diachronic plane to dig into the temporal depth of Europe as far as possible seems a fruitful task to properly understand nations in light of their ethnic past.[56] Yet, to what extent are non-European societies such as the Oromo polity during the 16th century, who had been in the darker corner of the records of world history, are taken into consideration when such justifications or refutations of counter-theories are made?

[56]As it has already been mentioned, it is ethno-symbolism's great contribution to combine Braudul's *la longue durée* with the process of ethno-genesis for understanding of the formation of a nation. Nevertheless, it seems plausible that there are still some loopholes that ethno-symbolism needs to address. It occurs to me that when ethno-symbolism argues that modern nations are a product of the persistence and transformation of ethnic based identities during pre-modern times, the presumption is that ethnic entities and nations represent two different kinds of social reality. We have to make here some reservations: Firstly, there is no universally accepted framework of understanding what we mean by 'ethnic' entities and a 'nation.' For instance, one may see how these two concepts have been modified and altered by just looking into different publications by Smith himself. Such modifications are understandable, given dynamic, fluid and problematic nature of a nation and an *ethnie*. Equally important is, however, the question which of this various definitional frameworks we should use if we have to understand nations as a transformation of the persistence of ethnic solidarity in the past? Where in the process of nation formation can we exactly mark the boundary between the particular stage of a nation and the one viewed as an ethnic stage? Both an *ethnie* and a nation are an ambiguous and fluid concepts, it seems hardly possible to delineate both empirically and analytically where exactly lays the boundary between a nation and an *ethnie*. Given the problematic nature of the boundary between an ethnic entity and a nation, it remains a difficult task to understand nation as a progression and transformation of an ethnic past unless we take the modernists' view that sees nation as the product of the modern period as 'a self-evident truth.'

Conclusion

The main preoccupation of the entire discussion throughout the whole thesis has been geared towards achieving one basic goal. The goal has been to test the validity of the universal axiom of the modernist tradition that implant the origin of a nation in a European specificity. To counter such modernist's dogmatism, the thesis has attempted to understand a nation from pre-modern period outside European specificity, by taking the Oromo polity during the 16th century as a case.

Provided that the modernists' view of a nation is an established and dominant tradition in the field of nation and nationalism, any research endeavor that intends to challenge such epistemological tradition in relation to a nation could be considered as an ambitious project. When the present thesis attempts to challenge the modernists' epistemological tradition concerning a nation by drawing on historical specificity in Africa that have been depicted as an abode of *tribal* societies, the current endeavor would rather give the impression that the current thesis is a mere over ambitious project that can hardly be realized.

It has been a requisite for the present thesis to look for an epistemological tradition that can render for the methodological presumptions of the thesis a kind of shelter to avoid the current thesis' endeavor from being considered as a mere over ambitious project. Grounding the methodological presumptions of the entire thesis on Gadamer's *Philosophical Hermeneutics* has not been a choice to make, but it has rather been a methodological prerequisite for the present thesis. In light of the points that have been just discussed, therefore, one can see the paramount significance of the task that was accomplished by chapter two which has served as the corner stone for the overall thesis. The following two arguments justify why chapter two is given such importance.

Firstly, throughout the entire thesis, the basic preoccupation has been to understand the phenomenon of a nation from the vantage point of historical specificity drawn from Oromo's mode of existence during the 16th century. Since nation as a concept is basically the result of European discursive unit, to use the Oromo historical specificity during the 16th century as a vantage point ultimately results in a contradiction between European oriented tradition and the one that is generated from an African context. Understanding a nation has, therefore, required two directional or reciprocal kinds of movements in between of these two traditions.

To understand a nation in this manner ultimately results in contradiction that can be understood as a hermeneutic encounter of experience. Such hermeneutics encounters have to be properly channeled in order to understand nation by synthesizing new meanings from the existing contradictions. From this mind set up, therefore, it can be reasserted that the thesis has gained a lot for it has been undertaken in a manner of hermeneutic practices.

Secondly, when the thesis has tried to address the problem of validity in opposition to some dogmatic positions of modernists, the thesis has been laid on two basic epistemological grounds that it has borrowed from existing hermeneutic traditions. One, the horizon of human experience is finite, but dynamic. Two, world history has to be the supreme authority of any theories that claim universality in the fields of social sciences and humanities.

By using these two epistemological positions from hermeneutics traditions, therefore, the other three chapters of the thesis have been harmonized in a kind of parts and whole relationship. By using these two pillars as an organizing nodes, chapter two has rendered for the thesis to have a kind of dialectal interplay among its various parts/chapters/ and between the parts and the thesis as a whole. To justify our assertion that upholds the overall thesis is organized in dialectical interplay, this section will briefly summarize each chapter in few paragraphs so that the discussions will develop the overall conclusion.

As it has been attempted to highlight in chapter one, the finitude aspect of human experience has been illustrated taking the Oromo as a case. The Oromo has been marginalized from Ethiopian historiography which in return partly explains why the Oromo have been in the darker corner of world historiography. If the Oromo has hardly been represented in various records of world history, then it is evident that the history of the Oromo has been almost inaccessible. It follows then; it is not a surprise to observe that Oromo's historical specificities have been overlooked when theoretical conclusions that have universal appeals have been made in relation to the phenomenon of nation.

Equally important also, it has been attempted to show in the same chapter that theories of nation and nationalism still lack a single, universal, and overarching theory to date. Among other things, this has been the case mainly because human knowledge is inherently dynamic that the knowledge base of nation and nationalism is enormously expanding in parallel with the horizon of human experience which is recurrently transforming to include the

complexities of the social universe. These complexities are multi-layered, cross-cutting and subject to historical trajectories that infusing these complexities into the existing theories of nation and nationalism has made the field of study to be the center of recurrent and fierce debates; and concepts of nation and nationalism to remain as ambiguous and as controversial as they have ever been.

By using modernists' view of a nation as a bench mark, nation has been understood as a universal phenomenon in the field of nation and nationalism. As universal phenomenon, the origin of a nation is embedded in the modern period which in turn is the outcome of combination of European specificities that include the French and Industrial Revolutions. Provided that world history has always been 'a great dark book,' it has been attempted to show that historical knowledge about the pre-modern world and particularly in areas outside Europe is insufficient and incomplete, therefore, it is precarious to conclusively conclude that nation during the pre-modern period did not exist at all.

Through chapter three, one important theme has come into surface: The Oromo during the 16th century had a socio-cultural and political entity that is in close semblance with the empirical implication of different features that a nation is believed to constitute. Since the Oromo has been at the darker corner of world history, it has been hardly possible for distinguished scholars in the field of nation and nationalism to give due attention for such African specificity while making different formulations about a nation at different occasions.

The basic purpose of chapter three has been to challenge the modernists' dogmatism concerning a nation. When the thesis attempts to understand a nation from the vantage point of Oromo society by using its mode of existence during the 16th century as a reference point, the thesis has ultimately revealed its methodological conviction in opposition to the temporal and spatial impositions of modernists' dogmatism in relation to the origin of a nation.

At this particular level of our discussion, therefore, we can suggest the following two points: For one thing, the modernists' dogmatism in relation to the origin of a nation is insufficient; for the other thing, in the presence of such empirical loopholes like the case with the Oromo, it is very dubious whether modernists' positions concerning a nation are conclusive or not.

It is evident that the suggestion that has been established in the last lines of the previous paragraph is a mere skeptic position that it does not strictly conclude whether the modernists' views concerning the origin of a nation are valid or not. As what has been attempted to accomplish in chapter four, there has been a need to understand the historical and social conditions which serve as an empirical context and framework from which nation is understood by scholars of nation and nationalism.

As it has been shown in chapter four, the pre-modern period has been basically understood from the vantage point of Europe. By using mainly European socio-historical contexts, it has been argued that the objective preconditions during the pre-modern world were not in a position to sustain the existence or formation of nationhood.

As it has been attempted to show implicitly in comparison to chapter three, and explicitly by using some comparative analogy between Gellner's 'agro-literate' polity and the Oromo polity during the 16th century in chapter four; the objective preconditions that prevailed during the pre-modern period in European context are entirely different from the one that is the case with the Oromo context in the span of the same period.

Provided that the two historical specificities are highly different to each other, any generalization that can be made by using either of these two specificities is hardly applicable to the other historical specificity. It occurs evident at this level that chapter three and chapter four are interdependent to each other. Chapter three has been integrated with such methodological presumptions of chapter two by highlighting the fact that world history has always been a great dark book.

On the other hand, chapter four has been harmonized relying on the same methodological presumption that states human horizon of experience is inherently finite. Thus the existing theories concerning a nation have been highly influenced by the finitude aspect of human horizon of experience. Chapter one, serving as an introductory platform, has highlighted two things: Existing historical knowledge concerning human history is by far incomplete; and consequently, theories of nation and nationalism have always been highly dynamic.

From this perspective, therefore, it is self-evident that the whole thesis and its various components are harmonized among each other in a kind of dialectical interplay. On the basis

of such claims of dialectical interplay among the thesis and its various chapters, the thesis proceeds to make some concluding remarks. It occurs at this level self-evident that the conclusion of the present thesis state that the modernists' view that embeds the origin of a nation in the modern period is invalid at least when seen from the vantage point of the Oromo historical context during the 16th century.

One important question has to be raised here: Did the Oromo represent a nation during the 16th century? In the present situation, it is hardly possible to conclusively conclude that the Oromo were indeed a nation during the 16th century. For one thing, to consider the Oromo as nation requires the existing knowledge base concerning a nation to be revised so that the existing temporal and spatial imposition upon the origin of a nation needs to be either reconfigured or abandoned. As long the conventional knowledge base concerning a nation is not revisited to accommodate the changes that we have proposed, it is hardly possible to regard the Oromo during the 16th century as a representation of nationhood.

The present thesis hopes it has further exposed the internal contradiction that is inherent in the concept of a nation by using fresh empirical evidences. Therefore, the thesis can add up to the existing contradiction as catalyst so that the outcome of the present endeavor will hopefully provoke or encourage scholars in the field to make further rethinking and consequently reformulation of the concept of a nation from a new foundation, the pre-modern period. The Oromo case will hopefully enrich the empirical knowledge base of scholars in the field to the effect that the Oromo can be seriously considered in the future undertakings when there will be an attempt to reformulate the concept of a nation.

Therefore, the present thesis can only suggest the following two points: One, it is very demanding to revisit the concept of a nation in way world history can be recurrently tapped as much as possible every time some historical realities come into light from otherwise darker and marginal positions like the Oromo has used to be. Such fresh empirical reality ultimately broaden the horizon of experience that the infusion of fresh interpretations will help to resolve through time the internal contradiction that is inherent in the concept of nation.

On the contrary, if the internal contradiction will persist and nation will always continue as controversial as what it is now, then one of the following skeptical remarks would rather prove to remain appealing. Following John Hall skeptical remark about nationalism, as

already indicated in chapter one, one may conclude that no single, universal theory of a nation is hardly possible. Like any other historical singularities, probably nation is also a singular social reality in which European nation is different from African nation; consequently, there is no universal principle that is free from any international contradiction to be equally applicable to both contexts. In the extreme case, it seems also likely that nation might have been a mere intellectual construct. If the latter extreme case is true, then there will hardly be any empirical reality from which nation can derive its validity.

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